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The Work of Christ;

OR

THE WORLD RECONCILED TO GOD.

SERMONS

PREACHED AT CHRIST CHURCH, ST MARYLEBONE.

WITH A PREFACE ON THE ATONEMENT CONTROVERSY.

BY THE

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Cambridge:
MACMILLAN AND CO.
AND 23, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN,
London.
1860.

232.3 L
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CONTENTS.

		PAGE
I.	The Forgiveness of Sins	1
II.	Christ Dying for Men	19
III.	Knowing after the Flesh	36
IV.	Sacrifice	53
V.	The Blood of Christ	72
VI.	The Passover	85
VII.	The Example of Christ	104
VIII.	The Baptism of Christ	122
IX.	The Temptation of Christ	137
X.	The Temptation of Christ (2) . . .	153
XI.	The Sinless Manifested to take away Sin	168
XII.	The Name of the Righteous Father . .	187
XIII.	Love, Divine and Human	205
XIV.	The Prodigal Son and his Brother . .	223
XV.	The Word is nigh unto thee . . .	239

PAGE

XVI. The Old Testament bearing Witness of Christ 256

XVII. The Righteousness of the Kingdom of Heaven 274

XVIII. Visible Signs of Invisible Grace . . 292

XIX. Creation by the Word 310

XX. The Sabbath-day and its Observance . 331

XXI. Holy Seasons 350

XXII. The Coming of the Son of Man . . 368

PREFACE.

THE first two Sermons in this volume were printed soon after they were preached. Some of those which follow were preached subsequently in order to supply explanations which the first two seemed to require. When I was called upon to decide whether a Second Edition of those Sermons should be printed, the same reason made me desire to add to them several on kindred subjects; and being thus led to make up a new volume, I have selected from the sermons I have recently preached at Christ Church such as either bore directly upon the central truth of the Atonement, or touched upon the relation between it and other truths.

A controversial method would be unsuitable to parochial sermons; but I may be permitted to take advantage of the opportunity which a Preface affords, to make a few remarks upon some objections which have been raised against the doctrine of these sermons. The controversial spirit, however, which seeks to damage an adversary as much as to establish a truth, would still be alien from my purpose. My object is to win rather than to refute. I take for granted that most of my hearers and readers have had that notion concerning the Atonement, against which I contend, mixed up with all that they have learnt of God's love and forgiveness, from their infancy upwards. An error so consecrated should be dealt with tenderly and considerately. The purpose at which I have aimed has been to shew that the notion of Christ having received punishment as our substitute at the hands of Divine Justice may be detached without injury from the true and scriptural doctrine of the Atonement. To many minds that notion is a continual source of distress

and uncertainty; in a vast number it is held passively, bearing no fruit but rather infecting them with barrenness; and it is a grievous stumbling-block in the way of those who strive to reconcile what they believe concerning God with the approved principles of justice. If therefore it can be shewn that the Gospel and the Scriptures are not responsible for such a view, and that what is directly set forth in the Bible and the Prayer-book may be fully and fairly received without it, the Church's atmosphere will be cleared of a most depressing cloud; and though party traditions and party spirit will suffer, the cause of Christ and of the Church will be proportionately advanced.

I am happy to avail myself of a courteous reply[1] to my two Sermons, by the Rev. C. Hebert, as representing the arguments commonly urged against them. And the first and chief thing which I have to do, is to explain that in a great part of what he supposes me to deny, Mr Hebert

[1] "Atonement by Propitiation, a fragment of the argument."

entirely misconceives the view which I advocate. He assumes that I exclude from the meaning of the Death of Christ all that is expressed by the terms *sacrifice*, *propitiation*, and *satisfaction*;—that I deny the *meritorious* character of that Death. I maintain, on the contrary, that these terms agree better with the doctrine of my Sermons than with that which Mr Hebert defends.

I will endeavour to state plainly what I deny, and what I do not deny. In a printed sermon of a very popular preacher of the day, the following illustration of "the plan of salvation" occurs. The preacher is reporting a conversation he had held with an inquiring Irishman. '"Pat," said I, "suppose you had been killing a man, and the Queen had said, 'That Irishman must be hanged.'" Said he, "And I should richly deserve it." "But suppose I was very fond of you, can you see any way by which I could save you from hanging?" "No, sir, I don't." "Then suppose I went to the Queen and said, 'Now your Majesty I am very fond of this Irishman; I think you are quite

right in saying he must be hung, but let me be hanged instead, and you will then carry out the law.' Now the Queen could not agree to it; but suppose she could (and He can who has power over all kings and queens), and suppose she should execute me, do you think the policeman would take you up afterwards?" Says he, "No, I should think not ra'ally, they would not meddle with me; but if they did I should say, What are you doing? Did not that gintleman condescind to be hung for me? Let me alone; you do not want to hang two people for the same thing, do you?" "Ah, my friend," said I, "you have just hit it; that is the way whereby we are saved: God must punish sin; Christ says, 'My Father, punish me instead,' and His Father did. He laid on Him the burden of our sins, and the punishment and chastisement of them too; and now that Christ is punished He would not be just if He were to punish any sinner that believes in Christ.' This illustration puts the preacher's view very clearly. I will add a similar one from another

popular preacher. A negro woman is the subject of this anecdote. 'He asked her to tell him what Jesus did for her. She told him in her simple way, and it seems to me that her answer sets forth the truth that I wish you to understand to-night. She said, "Why, massa, me a great sinner. God condemned me to die; Jesus, my Saviour, Jesus die for me. Massa," she continued, "it was either He die, or we die. He die, and we no' die." Yes, that is it. Dear friends, it was either He die, or we die. And as the poor negro woman said, "He die, and we no' die." He has died. Very well, then, we need not die, because Jesus has taken our place. Oh! that is a glorious truth. Christ has died. Very well, then, there is no need for you to die. Christ has paid the penalty of the law; then, you need not go to hell.'

There is an attractive simplicity, as I have admitted in one of the Sermons, in statements of this kind. Putting aside what many will think the irreverence and bad taste of the first quotation, it seems to me to set forth the logical pretensions

and the transparent fallacies of the popular view with peculiar clearness. First, the arithmetic is right, but the morality fails; afterwards the arithmetic also disappears in confusion. "The Queen could not agree to it." Why not? Obviously, because justice would not be satisfied by such a course. What else but justice is there to prevent her? But God can, because "He has power over all Kings and Queens." How should this Almighty power make it just for Him to do what the Queen would find it unjust to do? Then we have the broad principle laid down, that "two people are not to be punished for the same thing." Are they not? Suppose the wrong man to have been hung by mistake. Would justice excuse the real criminal, because he says, "You do not want to hang two people for the same thing, do you?" Neither of these preachers nor any one who holds with them believes that the punishment of Christ has done away with the liability of the whole human race to be punished. Suppose all mankind to be unbelieving, then, notwithstanding that

Christ has borne the whole punishment, the whole punishment would be inflicted over again. What makes the difference between one man and another, so that one shall escape and the other be punished, is not that Christ has been punished, but that the one believes, the other does not. God's justice is not *satisfied* by the punishment of Christ. It goes on to exact precisely the same 'satisfaction' from the many, as if Christ had not died.

This theory, then, that Christ was punished in order that God might be free to pardon us, I wholly repudiate. If the terms *merit*, *propitiation*, *satisfaction*, *sacrifice*, are to be linked exclusively to that theory, what is the meaning of them? They represent God as becoming merciful, being satisfied, accepting an offering, acknowledging a debt, in consideration of *suffering*. God beholds punishment,—pain inflicted,—and this propitiates Him, or renders Him gracious. Is it not a thousand times more reasonable and more reverent to believe that God is pleased and satisfied by the

voluntary humiliation and endurance of Christ, by the submission to His Father's will, by the love to His brethren, manifested in His Passion[1]? If we are to speak of merit, is it not contrary to all our ideas of desert, to call punishment, as such, meritorious? Is it not always moral excellence that we acknowledge as meritorious?

Those who refuse to believe that when Christ offered Himself to death as a man and for our sake, He was paying the penalties awarded to us by Divine justice, are not compelled to deny that this offering was a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world. The question between us and our opponents is what element in the Sacrifice of Christ was that upon which God looked down with grace and satisfaction. We say that it was

[1] "How could the Father be *satisfied* with the death of Christ, unless He saw in the sacrifice mirrored His own love?—for God can be satisfied only with that which is perfect as Himself. Agony does not satisfy God; agony only satisfied Moloch. Nothing satisfies God but the voluntary sacrifice of love."—Robertson's *Sermons*, 2nd Series, p. 301.

upon the love and submission manifested in humanity. Our opponents insist that it was upon the pain, as pain, though not apart from the voluntary endurance of it.

I have spoken of Sacrifice in one of the Sermons. But I have not done justice in the Sermons to that aspect of Christ's death which would most nearly occupy the place of the popular theory. It is expounded by Mr Campbell, in his work on the Atonement,—a work which combines depth and accuracy of thought with sensitiveness of Christian feeling in a degree rarely equalled. Mr Campbell has shewn that we could not think of the Father as satisfied, without the exhibition in humanity of a righteous condemnation of sin, perfectly answering to His own, and therefore of a sense of human sin such as that which weighed on the heart of Christ. In the fullest and simplest sense therefore we may speak of the Father being *propitiated* by the sacrifice of Christ,—understanding that the propitiatory efficacy of that sacrifice lay,—not in its penal retributiveness,—

but in the perfect response made by the Son in our flesh to the Father's mind with reference to sin. Those who feel that they cannot easily think of God as forgiving freely without something adequate on the part of man to meet that forgiveness and enter into harmony with it, may see in the vicarious sorrow and confession of Christ a power far more likely to satisfy the Father on our behalf than any vicarious punishment. All the bearings of this doctrine are largely expounded by Mr Campbell, and I would refer those of my readers who are willing to study with sufficient attention some of the noblest thoughts given to the world on the subject of the Atonement, to the book itself. Here I will only add that this view, like the popular explanation, is not very distinctly stated in Scripture. Both may be called developments. The one is an example of a true and harmonious development, the other of a traditional corruption[1].

[1] Mr Maurice's great work on the Doctrine of Sacrifice is a complete account of the Scriptural teaching on the subject, but his reasonings, like Mr Campbell's, though from different causes, cannot be mastered without considerable effort, such as only the more earnest of readers are willing to exert.

Holding as I do, then, the necessity of the Sacrifice of Christ, both for the satisfying of the Father and for the salvation of mankind, I cannot at all admit Mr Hebert's objection, that no adequate reason can be given for the death of Christ except the necessity of a punishment. I still protest againt *rationalizing* too much (as it may fairly be called) on the need of the death of Christ. I still contend that the *fact* is more to us than any theory about the cause of it. But, if for the free outflow of the Father's love and forgiveness upon our race it was needful that the sinless Head of that race should enter into the closest contact with our sin, and should overcome it, and so be qualified to represent Humanity adequately grieved for sin in the Father's eye; and if for the actual redemption or deliverance of mankind out of the bondage of death and sin it was needful that the Head of mankind should die and rise again the conqueror of death and sin;—these, surely, are no less adequate reasons for the passion of our Saviour, than if we argue that God could not pardon the sinner without a punishment.

No less adequate, as regards the ends to be obtained: and far more worthy of God. Mr Hebert objects that to suppose that the Father gave up His Son to such sufferings as He endured without any necessity for those sufferings, is more disparaging to the nature of God than to assume that He was subject to the necessity of vindicating His own law by the infliction of penalties. Possibly; but if the deliverance of mankind was to be the end of the sufferings of Christ, and if the glory of God were to be specially manifested through the Cross, these were worthy objects for which God should give up His own Son.

And the Scriptures do not really record any irreversible decree of punishment for sin, which punishment may not be more or less obviated by repentance. We shall be told indeed that the condemnations of the law are quite unconditional. Let us see if it be so. I imagine that no decree would rise to the lips of our opponents sooner than this, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." 'See,' it would be urged, 'with what terrible sim-

plicity the irreversible doom is pronounced.' We are all familiar with appeals to those words. But turn to the place in which these very words occur. They are in Ezekiel xviii., a well-known chapter which declares that every soul of man is judged by God according to its own doings and deserts,—that there is no such thing as prescriptive guilt or prescriptive righteousness. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (ver. 20). "But" —mark this,—"if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die" (ver. 21). "Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die" (ver. 28). And observe the words which follow: "Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal.

O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal? Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions: so iniquity shall not be your ruin." Whatever authority therefore is claimed for the decree, The soul that sinneth, it shall die, I claim equally for the following positions, (1) The soul that having sinned repents shall *not* die, and (2) God appeals, in justification of His own ways, to the principles of justice which He has implanted in His creature. The testimony of Scripture is to this clear effect, that God is able and willing to revoke the doom that He has himself pronounced. He has declared Himself *not* to be bound by threatenings which He has Himself uttered. He is perfectly free to suspend or to recall punishment according to His wisdom.

I will venture to say that if the candid reader will examine in its place any one of those passages of Scripture which have been claimed as speaking

of a substitutive punishment, he will meet with a similar result. Meanings which they do not properly bear, and which the very context shews that they do not express, become traditionally attached to words, and so various sayings in the Bible, and also in the Prayer-book, have acquired an arbitrary and incorrect interpretation. Mr Hebert makes an honourable admission which I would entreat our readers to ponder:—"Mr Davies naturally enough objects to the popular misconception of the true meaning of the *word* Atonement....No argument as to *the method* of the reconciliation between God and the sinner can be founded on this word, or on the Greek word of which it is the rendering" (p. 13). He attributes "to the general persuasion of man's need of an atonement by propitiation," "our letting the word atonement so universally slip into the distinctive sense of reconcilement by substitution." This is a fair argument to urge, though it might seem to give a dangerous value to unconscious tradition and to development. But of course the

language of authoritative records is not to be determined by any such slip in the sense of a word. If it is the pleasure of religious writers now to call the sufferings of Christ "meritorious" because they occupy the place of our punishment, we have a right to ask whether that is the proper meaning of the word, and to contend that 'merit' is rightly ascribed only to moral or spiritual qualities. '*Redemption*' seems to many readers to imply our being reconciled by the punishment of a substitute; but redemption is properly deliverance from bondage through the payment of a price.

A remembrance of these facts would open out the true sense of many expressions in both the Bible and our Prayer-book[1], which are com-

[1] Upon the general character and tendency of our Church formularies, perhaps a Dissenter is more likely to give an unbiassed opinion than a Churchman. I take the following testimony, therefore, from Mr Rigg, a Wesleyan author, whose work on *Modern Anglican Theology* Mr Hebert "heartily recommends to every student." He has been complaining that Archdeacon Hare did not hold the "Evangelical" doctrines concerning the Atonement and Inspiration. And he then pro-

monly misunderstood. It may not be superfluous to bear in mind that to *propitiate* is to render gracious, that *satisfaction* is the act of satisfying, that *oblation* means offering, and that a *sacrifice* is also an offering. It is well to remember that 'for' may mean 'in behalf of,' as well as 'instead of.'

ceeds thus: "Liberal as Hare was, he was a thorough Church-of-England man....Indeed, as we remarked in a former chapter, the Anglican Church arrangements and formularies are peculiarly suited to the principles and predilections of the Broad Churchman," p. 104. Mr Rigg had said, on p. 26, "The dominant tendency of the formularies of the Book of Common Prayer—a tendency derived from the originals out of which these formularies were selected and prepared, and characteristic of the whole stream of post-apostolic teaching, down even beyond Augustine, and indeed till the time of Anselm—is to dwell with marked predominance upon the personal life and character of Christ as the incarnate Son of God." Similarly, Professor Stanley, of Oxford, in an Appendix to two sermons recently published, on *Freedom* and *Labour*, appeals to the Prayer Book and to the general voice of the ancient Church, no less than to the words of Scripture, as countenancing that "simpler view" of the Atonement which knows nothing of the punishment of a substitute. I believe it will be found that, with reference to this particular doctrine, the Bible and the highest testimony of the Church are on one side, and the prevailing modern tradition on the other.

Such cautions being borne in mind, I feel confident that a candid reader, whether he continued to hold the doctrine or not, would come round in time to the following admission:— That in the whole of the Two Testaments there is not a single passage which states unambiguously the doctrine that Christ received at God's hands the punishment decreed to our sins, and thus enabled God to forgive us.

I cannot do much in this place to prove this assertion. My attempts to support it shall be limited to an appeal to a Biblical authority, and to the discussion of a few select passages.

The Dean of Canterbury, Dr Alford, has recently published that part of his Greek Testament which contains the Epistle to the Hebrews. He has thus had the whole Scriptural doctrine of Sacrifice brought specially before him; and there is probably no modern Biblical critic whose authority is higher with the intelligent religious public. In commenting on the word ἱλάσκεσθαι, he thinks it necessary to point out, that "we

never find in Scripture, Old Testament or New Testament, any such expression as" (translating Dr Alford's Greek) "the Father was propitiated concerning our sins on account of the death of His Son; or as, Christ propitiated God, or God's wrath, by His blood; never, God was reconciled." And he adopts from another commentator the following words: "As the Old Testament nowhere says, that Sacrifice propitiated God's wrath,...so also the New Testament never says that the sacrifice of Christ propitiated God's wrath." "To understand this rightly," adds Dr Alford, "is all important to any right holding of the doctrine of the Atonement." This is a testimony concerning the whole of the Bible, and a broader testimony than we want. For though the Bible does not say that God was reconciled, the expression occurs in our Church Articles; and provided that we do not force it into the sense that He was made gracious to us, or set free to pardon us, by the oblation of the *sufferings* of Christ, we need not be afraid of the

statement. What Dr Alford means to affirm respecting the Scriptures is, that they never attribute the Atonement, or our pardon, to the effect of Christ's sufferings in turning away the Divine wrath.

The following passages are some of the first to be quoted as adverse to the views I have maintained.

(1) *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.* 1 Peter iii. 18. Here "for" does not mean "instead of," in either place. Literally rendered, the passage is, "Christ once suffered, or died, concerning our sins, a just man on behalf of unjust men, that he might bring us to God." I deny nothing here stated. I call attention to the reason given why Christ died on behalf of unjust men: not, that God might be free to pardon, but "*that He might bring us to God.*"

(2) *Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give*

His life a ransom for many. St Matthew xx. 28. Here, on the other hand, the preposition rendered "for" means "instead of." But it is an exception which proves the rule. The image is that of *purchase*. The Son of Man pays His life down, that He may receive "many" in exchange. The doctrine of this passage is precisely the same as that of those which speak of our being bought with the price of Christ's death. "Ye are bought with a price," says St Paul; "therefore glorify God with your body and with your spirit, which are His." God has purchased us to be His own possession. In other words, the incarnation and death of the Son of God were the costly means which God actually employed to assert His right over us,—the price He paid to win our surrender. What is there here of the punishment of a substituted victim? If we ask, To whom was the price paid? we are following some of the Fathers in pushing the figure further than it is meant to go. Seeing that God is the purchaser and man the purchase, those Fathers

perceived no person but the Devil to whom the price could be paid; and they held that our Lord's bodily life was given up to the Devil because he had acquired a prescriptive right over men's souls and would not release them without being thus propitiated. But no modern theologian, I believe, adopts this view.

(3) *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.* Galatians iii. 13. St Paul is contrasting faith with subjection to the law. He says that those who are of faith are accepting a dispensation of blessing, those who choose rather to be under the law are putting themselves under a dispensation of cursing. 'Will you inherit blessing, or will you keep yourselves under a curse?' he virtually asks. It was the nature of the law, as distinguished from grace, to curse. It denounced penalties on the disobedient. It was the nature of grace to proclaim God's fatherhood and to invite men to freedom. But was it possible for men under the law to rise from subjection to the law and its condemnation into

the higher state of the children of a gracious God? Yes, Christ had given His own life that by it He might redeem us or purchase our emancipation;—that our spirits should be no longer in fear of the law, but should be delivered into the peace and happiness of those who know the Lawgiver to be a Father. "Christ became a curse for us," says St Paul, when He hung upon the cross, because the old law made every body hanging dead on a tree a curse, and a defiled thing. Christ accepted death, which is in itself a curse, and a specially accursed death, on our account. By thus submitting to all that the law could do and shewing the limit of its powers, He has given us a hope and a strength above the law. We are wilfully excluding ourselves from blessing and freedom, if we make the condemning law the ruling power over our spirits. Here, again, there is nothing of the punishment of a substituted victim.

(4) *Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins*

should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed (1 Peter ii. 24). In the first clause St Peter is generally thought to have had in his mind the words of Isaiah, "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," which St Matthew tells us were fulfilled in His healing sicknesses and casting out devils. This then was one fulfilment of the prophet's words, but it was not precisely what St Peter meant. St Peter speaks of what Christ did upon the cross. He there *bore our sins*. But St Peter does not say that Christ endured the *punishment* due to our sins. He bore the sins themselves. He had the sense of them, the true grief for them, a share in the misery they cause. He had all this, though sinless. And why? not, again, that God might be free to pardon, but that we might die to sin and live to righteousness,—that we, contemplating His death and resurrection, might accept His mind and spirit, and being sworn to a penitent renunciation of sin, might live the life of faith and righteousness

which Christ Himself imparts to us. "By whose stripes ye were healed." Not, I must reiterate, in consideration of whose stripes ye were excused. But,—the contemplation of whose suffering and death stirred up the powers of health and life within you; whose crucified body filled you with shame and hope, and drew you to the Father; who through His voluntary humiliation became to you the power of God and the wisdom of God.

I must keep within narrow limits as to the number of passages to be discussed; and I do not know that there are any appearing to be more adverse to the doctrine of these Sermons than those which I have selected. Any similar expressions which may occur to the reader, I must commend to his candid consideration.

But I must make one more appeal "to the Law and to the Testimony." Some of the readers of this preface may have met with the name *Neoplatonist*, which Mr Hebert also adopts, as describing the kind of theology which this volume aims at expounding. It is not very

important to determine in what degree the heathen or Jewish philosophers, called the Neoplatonists, held the same views with theologians of our own day. But it may be a service to some readers to give them a notion of what is meant by controversialists when they call their opponents Neoplatonists. I will endeavour to do this by quoting some passages of Scripture.

All things were made by the Word; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. St John i. 3, 4. *Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature, for in Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities, or powers; all things were created through Him and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things are held together.* Colossians i. 15—17. *I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ.*

1 Corinthians xi. 3. *God hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.* Ephesians i. 22, 23. *We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.* Ephesians ii. 10. I would request my readers to consider these texts, remembering the many like them, calmly and intelligently, and then to ask themselves the question, Does the common theology of our time do full justice to this part of the teaching of the Scriptures?

I believe that when the title 'Neoplatonist' is given to any theological writer, it is meant that he seeks to unfold the truths contained in those Scriptures. It is meant that he dwells upon what Christ was before He appeared in our flesh; that he studies to discern the Living Word of God in creation and in every part of it; that he resolves not to think of men except as formed in God's image, and making up a body of which the Son of God is the Head; that he regards

sin as a violation of God's design and work, and redemption as a carrying out of God's design in a conflict with and triumph over sin; that he desires to rest upon the Eternal Will and Purpose of God as manifested in Jesus Christ.

These views and tendencies are liable to the charge of being "mystical." They entered into the thoughts and lives of most of those who are called the Mystics. They may have had some witness amongst the Neoplatonists.

The question is whether they are Scriptural and true. Let the Scriptures be searched, and let the facts of experience be pressed to give up their meaning. It may yet be seen, that truths are not the less real or practical, because they are not popular and superficial. It is no argument against a doctrine, that it shews affinity with what has been held before by the thoughtful of other sects and schools. To exhibit points of agreement with Buddhists, Neoplatonists, Unitarians, Quakers, Puseyites, is no presumption against an exposition of the Gospel. The decided

presumption is that the true doctrine concerning God and Christ would justify all that is true in the various systems of men, and exhibit the foundation of all that is plausible in them. The doctrine which the world needs now, is one that will accept and do justice to all existing facts, and shew that beneath all visible and temporary things there is One Eternal Name,—the Name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, God blessed for ever.

SERMON I.

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

St Luke VII. 42.

"When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both."

IF there is any subject which should naturally awaken the sensitiveness of a Christian mind, it is that of the Atonement. Upon no other can it be more important that our views should be right and Scriptural. If we consider the meaning of the word Atonement, we shall see at once that it must belong to the very essence of the Gospel. Atonement, as used in the New Testament, is Reconciliation; and a Gospel or good news from God to men, alienated as they are from Him, must include a message of Reconciliation. Believers in a Gospel therefore cannot be too earnest about the reality and the nature of the Reconciliation or the Atonement. To be sound upon the Atonement,—that is, to report rightly God's Word

concerning Reconciliation,—must be the first necessity in a preacher of the Gospel.

If therefore there is a growing attention paid to this subject; if there is a growing anxiety that the doctrine of the Atonement should be rightly proclaimed by preachers to the people; let us take it as a welcome sign that Christians in general are desiring more earnestly to know the truth upon which their whole profession rests,—to know it as a reality, and not merely to acquiesce in it as a dogma. It will be an ample reward for any unavoidable disturbance and pain, a full compensation for much that may be irreverent and unworthy in the treatment of so high and sacred a subject, if the question is more seriously asked, Has an Atonement or Reconciliation been really made between God and man? What is the basis of it? "For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth." God's answer to such an inquiry would be a deeper and clearer and more general conviction that He, of whom are all things, has reconciled the world to Himself.

Let me entreat you to bear in mind, dear brethren, that these two words Atonement and Reconciliation are in the New Testament exactly identical. It would be of great advantage if this were always remembered. The word Atonement has almost passed out of common use, and it is there-

fore easier to slip some arbitrary signification under it. The word Reconciliation, on the other hand, though originally a less English and a less significant word, is still in common use and expressive of living facts, so that it offers a more stubborn resistance to any artificial application. We sometimes have the happiness of seeing those who have been estranged again reconciled to one another. That living process is a better help than a dead name like Atonement can be, in apprehending what it is for man to be reconciled to God.

It has been remarked that the Apostles' Creed includes no profession of the doctrine of the Atonement. Those who have no great reverence for the Creed might contend that this absence, being a serious defect, was a salutary proof of the inferiority of even the most honoured of merely human compositions to those which are included in the Canon of Scripture. But then it is also observed that not one of the Gospels contains the word. If the *thing* is in the Gospels, or in the Apostles' Creed, it must be there under some other expression. Now if we remember that Atonement is Reconciliation, we shall feel that he comes very near it who is taught to say, I believe in *the forgiveness of sins*. So in the Gospels, we find the substance of Atonement under the word Forgiveness. When we use the Lord's Prayer, again, we need not be shutting

out Atonement from our thoughts. We are laying hold of the Atonement, when we pray, Forgive us our trespasses.

And therefore I have taken the words of my text, "when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both," with the design of asking you, my Christian brethren, to consider solemnly what truth of God we are affirming, and what human error may be mixed up with it, when we utter the word Atonement. It is quite familiar to you that a very prevalent usage of the word calls up, not the great *fact* of Reconciliation and the Forgiveness of sins, but a *theory of the condition* which enabled God the Father to be reconciled to us and to forgive us our sins. I mean to protest against that theory; but for no reason more strongly than for this, that it tends to cloud and confuse the one Divine Gospel, that in the Son of God we have redemption, even the forgiveness of our sins. May God give us all a stronger, a more rejoicing, faith in the Atonement. May He preserve us from the snare of substituting a piece of human reasoning for the simple reception of His message.

The parable in which our text occurs was spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ to illustrate the forgiveness of sins, and its consequences. "A certain creditor had two debtors; the one owed him five hundred pence, the other fifty: and when they

had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both." This forgiveness is an image of God's forgiveness of His debtors. The Son of God, who declared His Father's forgiveness authoritatively in that Father's Name, represents God as frankly forgiving those who owe and have nothing to pay. We can imagine a human creditor, of a generous spirit, forgiving a debt, without getting the payment of it in any shape. If he is paid by some one else in place of the debtor, we do not speak of his having forgiven or remitted the debt. This is only an illustration: we may come to a closer analogy. We can understand a fellow-man pardoning an offence committed against himself, without any equivalent to the punishment of the offender being paid to him. We can understand a parent frankly forgiving a child who has sinned against him. We delight in the thought of such parental forgiveness being perfectly unbought and unconditional. This kind of forgiveness the Son of God has selected as an example of what His Father's forgiveness is. He has shewn us the prodigal son behaving shamefully to his father and his home, and his father nevertheless welcoming the prodigal without conditions and without reproaches as soon as he is willing to return; and he says to us, *That* is the disposition of the Heavenly Father towards those who have sinned the most shamefully against Him.

Well, brethren; one would think that we are upon safe ground here. It would seem that the freest forgiveness of human sin of which our human experience gives us any conception, is what our Lord would have us believe in as proceeding from our Heavenly Father. One might easily suppose that such forgiveness is wonderful, indeed, on account of the grace and love which it implies, but in all respects most worthy of the Highest God, and that a poor sinful creature could not do anything better for himself or more respectful towards God, than to receive such forgiveness as an unpurchased boon into his heart of hearts. We ought at least to be very suspicious of any views which would tamper with the assurances of Jesus Christ concerning God's frank forgiveness of sins.

But such views we have to meet; and very common they are, and very confidently urged. It is argued that unconditional forgiveness is, once for all, impossible to God: that His justice makes it impossible for Him to forgive without the infliction of punishment: that all God's goodwill towards us would not have availed to save us out of the hands of His justice, which must have held every child of Adam fast bound in misery without the possibility of deliverance, had not the expedient been discovered that the infinite Son of God should suffer our punishment: that with that suffering the

Justice of God has been satisfied: and that this condition enables God to forgive in those cases in which a second condition,—that of faith,—is also present. To doubt the force of this chain of argument is maintained by some to be nothing less than heresy. The sinner finds salvation, it is said, not in simply receiving God's forgiveness, but through the discovery that without the infliction of punishment God was unable to forgive.

One reflection which our text suggests is this: that our Saviour entirely omitted to teach the doctrine that God could not forgive without the infliction of punishment, or in other words, that He could not remit the debt until—it was paid. His whole effort is to persuade men that His Father is essentially a forgiving God, and that nothing stands in the way of God's forgiveness except man's ignorance of it and unwillingness to receive it. I should wonder at the boldness of the man who would say that the Gospels, at any rate, contain the doctrine that God's forgiveness could not act freely, until the punishment of His Son had satisfied His justice. How Jesus Christ when teaching upon the earth could have withheld this doctrine, and represented God as like the father of the prodigal son, or the creditor who frankly forgave the debtors who had nothing to pay, is for those who hold the doctrine to explain.

The fact is, that there is not a word in the Bible about the *punishment* due to our sins being inflicted by a just God upon His own Son. The notion is indeed a very common one,—so common that there are few religious books of the widest currency which are entirely free from it. There are two, however, from which it is absent, the Bible and the Prayer Book. A doctrine which is not in these is not binding on a Protestant or a Churchman. We are at liberty to examine it freely according to the best light we have. And that doctrine, of the punishment of a substitute for our offences, is one which both commends itself and does not commend itself, to the common understanding. It is, on the one hand, exceedingly simple. It has a logical or arithmetical simplicity which is in some degree attractive. If you exclude the *moral* character of punishment, and make it simply a matter of mathematical distribution, it seems satisfactory to say that the ill-desert of our sins has been balanced by punishment received, and is cancelled. Strange as it seems to us now, we find that in old times when the idea of justice was confused and entangled by mistakes of the understanding, men fancied that a just judge was satisfied if the punishment of a crime did not fall on the real offender, provided that it fell on some one. But if you went into a court now, and pro-

posed to a judge to go yourself to prison instead of a convicted thief, he might admire your self-sacrifice, but he would certainly refuse the offer, because he would hold that justice was *not* satisfied by such a substitution. If an elder son proposed to a father to take the punishment he was going to inflict on a younger, would the father's justice urge him, do you think, or would it forbid him, to inflict the stripes upon the innocent? Do you not see, brethren,—do you not feel, you that are parents,—that the notion of the punishment of Christ as our substitute by the Just Judge and Father, however it may please the arithmetical faculty in our minds, is utterly confounding to our moral judgment and our sense of right? It is not because it is a mystery, above our reason, that we cannot accept it:—nothing could be more easily intelligible:—it is because it makes God less wise and just in dealing with an offender than we ourselves should hope to be.

There are two or three assumptions against which I would be understood to protest. (1) One is that God, through a necessity to which the Almighty Himself is subject, cannot pardon without the infliction of the punishment deserved by sin;—an assertion utterly without warrant, contradicted by the human analogies which our Saviour Himself commended to us as our best guides,

and which would probably have never been thought of, unless the perverted notion of the substitution of Jesus Christ for us had suggested it.

(2) The second is, that the guilt of sin in God's eyes could be wiped out by any punishment, however infinite. Imagine the sinner punished to the utmost of his deserts: What is the effect produced? Is there any atonement or reconciliation? If enmity existed, will it not remain? If the sinner was offensive to God, must he not be so still?

(3) The third is, that God's perfect righteousness, if it called for punishment, could be satisfied by the punishment of the innocent in the place of the guilty. The reverent and the Scriptural idea of God's righteousness is that it is more considerate, more equitable, more free and unembarrassed, than man's righteousness; and that the man who would be most really and inwardly righteous should seek after God's righteousness and imitate that. But if the highest representation of God's heavenly righteousness exhibits Him as accepting with satisfaction the sufferings of the innocent as the punishment of the guilty, could you honestly recommend the Divine righteousness to the imitation of the Judges of our Criminal Courts, of the heads of our families? Could you pretend, as I have seen it urged, that

God's infinite Majesty made it just for Him to do what it would be unjust for one of his representatives on earth to do? How could the difference in *greatness* affect the comparative *justice* of the proceedings?

Dear brethren, I know that there are multitudes who feel in their hearts the pressure of what I have been urging, but who find this view, of Christ's sufferings satisfying God's justice or God's violated law, so bound up with all that they have been accustomed to hold sacred, so mixed with the true Scriptural accounts of the Sacrifice of Christ, that they are afraid to question it. It is a blessing, scarcely deserved, but yet one which has been vouchsafed to such hesitating believers, that others have faced the question for them. More faithful to the voice of righteousness, which is the voice of God, within them, and more jealous for the honour of God, they have refused to believe without searching for themselves, that the Scriptures which tell us of the love of God in Christ, could also represent God to us as the servant of His own edicts, and as seeing nothing in punishment but a kind of quantitative equivalent to transgression. The Scriptures, they have seen, abound in expressions which *may easily be turned into* confirmations of such traditions; but they have also seen that the language in which Christ

is spoken of as dying for us, or as bearing our sins, and as having given Himself for us a Sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour, is by no means identical with that by which God is said to have punished Christ instead of us, and therefore to be able to spare us. To preach Christ Crucified, is not to proclaim that the wrath of God against our guilty race was drawn off upon His Son and exhausted in His innocent person. The Scriptural doctrine of the Atonement is not that God's angry justice against us was satisfied by a victim so noble and so priceless as the Lamb of God.

What *is* then, you may ask, the Scriptural doctrine of the Atonement, or of the Reconciliation? Perhaps there is no more precise or deliberate statement of it than in these words of St Paul. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us,—to the Apostles,—the Ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." It is

a strong expression, certainly,—"God hath made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us." But it does not say that our punishment was inflicted upon Christ. God identified Him with us sinners in our sin, so far as one himself sinless could be so identified,—and it was that very sinlessness, be it remembered, His pure and holy *love*, which rendered it possible for Him to be made so closely one with us:—and this was in order that we might be identified with Him in His righteousness. He shared our sin, in the sense of it, in sorrow for it, in a vicarious confession of it, in the miserable consequences of it, that we might be reconciled through such a Saviour to our Father, and might share His righteousness, in its faith and its filial fellowship with God. By thus giving up His Son, God manifested His Divine glory in its infinitely touching aspect towards ourselves, He was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.

It is a common objection to the doctrine of God's free and unconditional forgiveness, that if God *could* forgive sins without exacting a punishment equivalent to human guilt, the death of Christ becomes an unaccountable act of humiliation and sacrifice. To ask why God did not reconcile the world to Himself without the death of His Son upon the Cross is a question of the same

class with that, Why did not God bring men to perfect holiness without sin. It is unprofitable to inquire why the whole work of the Creator was not something different from what it is. But those who are content to contemplate the beauty of God's actual government of the world and who seek to know God's actual ends in His works, will surely find a worth and a glory in the Cross of Christ, better than by setting it off for the fulfilment of an imaginary necessity. The Cross as the medium of love and sacrifice, Christ the Crucified proving His fellowship through sympathy and humiliation and death with His guilty creatures, are more than a mere example set us as a copy to imitate. If the Father of Jesus Christ is our Father; if Jesus Christ is our Head and Representative, the root of our life and type of our perfection; such a manifestation as His yielding Himself to a hated death for our sake, is a power of Atonement which ought to be irresistible. Through Him we may come to the perfect Father. In Him we see the Father's long-suffering and forgiveness. In Him we see our own claim on the Father's favour. In Him we behold God stooping to the ground to raise us from our degradation, and setting us upright in His favour. In Him we see God justifying us freely, accepting us in our unworthiness as His own children. In Him we

see our own nature bearing itself rightly towards the Father, all but despairing because of the wickedness of sin, conquering despair by trust because of the goodness of Him whom we have offended.

Let us give heed therefore to the remonstrance which warns us not to look upon the life and death of Christ as nothing more than an example for us to follow. That Christ was our example, every Christian admits. But the Scriptures certainly proclaim Him to be more than our example. To proclaim Him as such, would hardly be a grand *Gospel*. No: the Son of God is proclaimed to be a mediator binding us to the Father, to be the Head of human nature in whom God is well pleased, to be a living witness of God's relation to us as a Father, and of His longing desire that we should return to Him and be His children. Will any one tell us that the Cross is more powerful in some other aspect, than as it reveals the unbounded paternal love of God towards us, and the unbounded brotherly love of Christ? Does the dark and offending heart of a man require any better revelation to soften and to draw it than that of the gracious Father whom he has wronged and who yet claims him as a brother of His perfect Son? Will any Christian dare to say, that to tell of the tender, pardoning,

redeeming love of God and of Christ is a mockery which the heart will reject, unless we can add the assurance of God's justice being eliminated or put out of the way by a vast undiscriminating punishment?

It may seem a hard task to be laid upon us, to purge our faith in the Atonement from mixtures which so many good men have received with it. Hard or not, the course of God's dispensations in the training and education of the Church seems plainly calling us to it. But like every yoke and burden of the Saviour, we shall find it a deliverance instead of a burden, if we meet it faithfully. And let this hope sustain us,—that by looking upon God's Atonement as He has declared it to us, we may regain the full Apostolic faith in it, with all the consequences that must flow from such a faith. To see what these are, look at St Paul's views, and compare them with the views of the world now. See how with him, every principle and act of morality rested upon the union of man with God in Christ, upon the true sonship of man, pardoned and reconciled, to his Eternal Maker. Truly, the faith in the forgiveness of sins was not a dead notion to one who believed in Christ as St Paul did. "I am crucified with Christ," he says: "nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the

flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." "Be ye followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." Mark, dear brethren, the Apostle does not preach, Let us love God, as that good man Jesus Christ once loved God. But, Let us love Christ, and the Father through Christ, as Christ loved *us*, and as the Father called us to be His children in Christ. There is indeed a mighty difference between pointing out Christ to frail sinners as a lofty example,—and bearing witness of Him as shedding forth the Eternal Father's love upon us; between saying, See what a combination of heroism and meekness the Death of Christ holds out before us,—and saying, See what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! What the Gospel calls us to, is not to nerve ourselves to imitate the best of men, but to receive into our hearts the compassionate, the considerate, grace of our Father in heaven. May we all be thankful hearers of that Gospel, and may we count it our highest privilege to affirm it and to interpret it to our fellow-men. Such a Gospel is worth some thought, some trouble, some sacrifice. It is worth our while to be sure whether or no we have a High Priest and a Bro-

ther, who knows our weakness, at the right hand of God; to be sure whether we are beloved children of one Invisible God, the maker of heaven and earth; to be sure whether we may run the race of life in dependence upon a Friend and Supporter, cheered by a Light which guides us, comforted by a Love which knows no weariness; to be sure whether the righteousness of our lives is one which belongs to God Himself and which He will manifest in those who submit to Him; to be sure whether a glorious goal is set before every man in the knowledge of Him whom to know is life eternal.

Dear brethren, a Spirit has been given who bears witness of Christ and makes His secret presence known in the hearts of men. That Spirit is the pledge of the Reconciliation, the earnest of the Atonement by which God has made us His children. Because we are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So to cry to God is to be inwardly reconciled to Him; to call Him Father from the bottom of our hearts, is not to receive the grace of God in vain.

SERMON II.

CHRIST DYING FOR MEN.

2 Corinthians V. 15.

"He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

THERE are two conflicting views concerning the sacrifice of Christ, to which I referred last Sunday for the sake of protesting against both. (1) The first is that which claims to be the most orthodox opinion, that the sufferings of Christ are to be regarded as taking the place, for the satisfaction of the Father's justice, of the *punishment* which our sins deserved, and from which we could not otherwise have been set free. (2) The other regards the Death of Christ as an *example* of the highest kind of human virtue, but as nothing more. I objected to the first, because it begins by taking away from God the power of forgiving freely, and goes on to make his justice satisfied with what

would be really a mockery of justice. The second view no Churchman could profess to hold; it is manifestly condemned both by the Scriptures and by the Church. I only referred to it, because it is sometimes assumed that those who refuse to see anything *penal* in the sufferings of Christ can only regard His death as an example of patience.

To protest against those opinions, brethren, is really to raise the question, What is the true view of the Sacrifice of Christ? For God forbid that we should content ourselves with finding out what we do *not* believe, and be careless of ascertaining what we do or may believe. For the sake of clearness, and that the truth may be more distinctly apprehended, it is necessary to protest sometimes against perversions: but let it be the desire of our hearts, and the effort of our lives, to know the truth, and by it to be made free. Let us bear in mind that the habit of looking for inconsistencies and contradictions may only minister to a barren conceit, but that the humble pursuit of light and knowledge will be rewarded by the greatest blessings which it is possible for our human nature to receive. Let us consider ourselves pledged, by any repugnance we feel to certain views which others hold, to inquire the more earnestly for ourselves what is to be known concerning the meaning of the death of Christ.

Our subject last Sunday was God's free forgiveness of sins. I spoke of this as being the chief thing signified by the Cross, and its highest glory. If any one asks, What is the meaning of the Cross, and of Christ crucified? the Scriptures teach us, I submit, to return this as the first answer: God was shewing, in the suffering Person of His only-begotten Son, that His goodness and forbearance towards men are boundless, that His love is not repelled and exhausted, but rather quickened, by the sin and misery of mankind, and that he invites men to reconciliation and trust. "He that spared not His own Son," argues one Apostle, "but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" "In this was manifested the love of God towards us," says another Apostle, "because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." Could any other act which we can imagine have proved the forgiving grace of God more demonstratively or more touchingly? If not, we are clearly recognizing in the Cross of Christ a supreme *reconciling power*. Christ is lifted up, that He may draw all men to God. The proclaiming of Christ crucified, to whomsoever it may be a stumbling-block or foolishness, may be, to those whose ears are open to a message of love, the power of God to their salvation.

That is one answer to the question we are considering,—not an answer which settles it once for all, and tempts us to put the Cross of Christ on one side as a problem solved with which we have no more to do; but one which keeps us to the wondering contemplation of the Cross by making our wonder in some measure intelligent. The Sacrifice of Christ is an index of a Love which no study can exhaust, and of a filial right to that love on our part which goes down to the roots of our being and of our life.

I have taken for our text this morning a passage in which St Paul speaks of Christ *dying for us*. This is the simplest and commonest way of connecting the death of Christ with ourselves. It is an expression often interpreted as meaning that God's justice, demanding *our* death, took the death of Christ instead of ours. If we consider our text, we shall see in what way St Paul applies the truth that Christ died for us.

But before considering these words, let me give the utmost prominence possible to a truth which has a most important bearing on all explanations of the Sacrifice of Christ. The truth I mean is this,—That the *fact* of the Son of God dying and rising again is what the Gospel and the Scriptures present to us first, before giving us any explanation of it. 'Jesus of Nazareth was the

Son of the Living God. He was rejected and put to death by wicked hands. He rose from the dead, by the power of His eternal life, and after being seen by many, ascended to His Father's right hand.' This is what the Gospels one after another recount to us. They scarcely give us any explanation or application of those facts,—only here and there a pregnant hint. This is what the Apostles' Creed recites. This history must contain whatever explanation or theory may be deduced from it.

Observe, dear brethren, I do not say that explanations of the Sacrifice of Christ are worthless. I do say two things. (1) That the historical fact of the Son of God dying as He did upon Calvary is much greater and more fundamental than any doctrine of the Atonement can be. (2) That such a fact will probably contain *many* doctrines or teachings, and that he who attempts to account for the mighty fact by some simple theory of the cause or necessity or fruit of it, is in danger of substituting an intellectual proposition for a living reality which acts directly on the heart and conscience, and of stopping the profitable consideration of that reality.

This danger was never so great as it is in these modern times. That is because the tendency has become so strong, to substitute abstractions called

doctrines, as the objects of belief, in place of Persons and the acts of Persons. You may realize this by imagining what a modern Creed might be, and comparing it with the old Catholic Creeds. People now might say, I believe in the Depravity of man, I believe in Justification, I believe in Sanctification, and so forth. The Creeds say nothing of man's depravity, or of schemes for his salvation; they speak of God, and of what God is, and has done.

We have a right therefore,—and a right which it would be most desirable to exercise,—if we are asked what our doctrine or theory of the Atonement is, to object to the question in that form. A man may be a believing Christian man without any doctrine of the Atonement. If he believes in the Son of God made man and dying and rising again, and if that knowledge gives him a real trust in the Almighty God as the Father of his spirit, he has the true faith. But if we are asked, What significance do you recognize in this marvellous fact?—we shall reasonably answer, "I see many things implied in it; I hope to see continually more and more." Our Communion Service speaks of "the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ, dying for us, and of the *innumerable benefits* which by his precious blood-shedding he hath obtained to us."

It will be well for us, brethren, to hold fast by such language as this,—to put the Death of Christ as a fact first, a fact obviously full of Love, and then to be ready to learn ourselves and to point out to others any of the blessings which we have reason to believe are contained for us in that Sacrifice.

So we may be able to give our minds quietly and thankfully to the consideration of any aspects of the great fact which the Scriptures present to us.

And the view of Christ's Death which is now before us is one which was specially dear to the mind of St Paul. "Because One died for all, all," he says, "died in Him; and He thus died for all that those who live should not henceforth live to themselves, but to Him who died and rose again for them." Observe the meaning here given to the expression "*for* all." St Paul does not say that Christ died *instead of* all, but as the Head and Representative of all. He no more died that we might not die, than he rose again that we might not rise again. In virtue of this relation, it is to be assumed that when He, the Head and Representative, died, His members,—those comprehended in Him,—died also. He died and rose again, that His death and rising might be a law to them,—that they might die and rise with Him.

This then is another application of the great truth of our oneness with Christ,—of that truth without which we cannot have the full faith in the Atonement or Reconciliation, which the Gospel offers to us. God's giving up of His Son is a proof of Love; but the fact that His Son, in whom God is perfectly well pleased, is in such a way and to such a degree the Head of mankind and the brother of every man, that He will not allow them to be separated from Himself, but comes down to their low estate, takes them by the hand, and presents them as His own to the Father's pity and forgiveness,—this fact, when it is clearly apprehended, gives us the sense of justification. It enables us to see what ground a sinner has for regarding himself in all his degradation as a child of the Heavenly Father; it gives a security for our hope and trust, which our sins, however dark they may be, cannot reasonably take away.

Well, brethren;—St Paul, who is repeatedly enforcing this glorious truth, of our membership in Christ as the Head of humanity, of our brotherhood to Him as the Elder Brother of the race, of our creation and standing in Him by the original purpose of God, brings it to bear, in our text and in other places, upon the continued life of one who has believed in Christ. He bids us see in Christ going down into death and rising

from it, a power and a law by which we are to be dead and to be risen. Christ, he says, has carried us with Him through His death up into His heavenly life.

If this sounds fanciful, as it does and must do to so many in this age, let me remind you that it is precisely the ground upon which our Church has placed our Christian lives. Indeed, it is all virtually contained in the word, Member of Christ. But in the Baptismal service, St Paul's view is stated explicitly. We are "to remember always that Baptism represents to us our profession, which is, to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto Him; that as He died and rose again for us, so should we who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness; continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living." Nothing, you must admit, can be more practical than the tone of these words; they may well lead us to inquire whether we could possibly connect the shunning of evil and the pursuit of good in our daily experience with any firmer foundation, with any more vital root, than that which they present to us.

With a direct view to practical piety and virtue, St Paul has drawn out this truth from

that first and higher one of God's forgiveness and justification of us in Christ.—It was very early discovered that men might make use of the Gospel of forgiveness to excuse their remaining in sin. 'Being forgiven, why need I care much how I live?' St Paul meets this sort of argument by pressing home that truth, of oneness with Christ, which is implied in the forgiveness and justification. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that Grace may abound? God forbid.—How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" How are we dead to sin? In Christ, in whom the Grace reached us and found us. "Know ye not, that so many as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." That is, not in the resurrection of our bodies after death, but in the power of a new life as Christians. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead

with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (not hereafter, but now). "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

In those words, brethren, you have a fuller exposition of the practical bearing of the idea expressed in our text. It shews that it was not a fanciful analogy merely in the Apostle's mind,—that to him it was the solid ground on which a Christian man was to erect his daily life. This, then, dear brethren, we may take, I apprehend, as the continuous application of the Atonement to our lives. We are to see in the Death of Christ a Law of Death for ourselves, in the Risen Life of Christ, a Law of Life for ourselves. To quote again words which I adduced last Sunday, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

There may be a difficulty to our minds in understanding the expressions, 'Christ died to

sin.' 'Reckon yourselves dead to sin.' Here again it is important to let the *fact*—the Son of God died—precede any attempt at explanation. We should try whether the fact will not explain itself. Death is very mysterious; but in all speculations about it, as well as in receiving what account the Scriptures give of it, we naturally connect it with sin. Death is the victory of sin. Corruption is the mark and stamp of the curse. Our mortal bodies are due to death because of sin. Our Saviour's death, therefore, will present itself to our minds as in some sense an acknowledgment of sin. He therein entered into the conditions which have befallen humanity because of sin. But He also drew the limit of the power of sin. He brought His body from the grave, emancipated from the conditions of sin, from death and the curse. Death hath no more dominion over Him. So we may submit our lives and ourselves to the Death of Christ. We may recognize and accept the conditions of the curse. We must die. Corruption must prey on these mortal bodies. Let sin have its own. But let it have no more than its own. The confession of the deathly power of sin is in fact a denial of its authority over the living man. To die to sin is to renounce its claim over our spirits. To die with Christ unto sin, is to live with Him unto God.

Yes, brethren, to live in Christ unto God. This is presented to us invariably as the great *end* of the Atonement. 'God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.' 'Our Saviour Christ, both God and man, did humble Himself even to the death upon the Cross, for us miserable sinners, who lay in darkness and the shadow of death, that He might make us the sons of God, and exalt us to everlasting life.' 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.' May I ask you, dear brethren, in your reflections upon the work of Christ, to bear this *end* more constantly in mind. That we may have *life*. That the world may be saved. That men may believe in Him who loved them, and died and rose again for them, and through Him may have faith and hope in the Eternal Father, and so may truly live.

For what is Death, but the loss of the life that is in God, and wherewith He sustains His creatures? And what is Sin, but the alienation of the will of a spiritual and voluntary creature from the Father whom it is made to cleave to? And what is Life, but fellowship with the Father and

with His Son Jesus Christ? And what is Righteousness, but trust in the Righteous God? And therefore God, wishing to bring His human creatures, His children made in His own image, out of Sin and Death into Life and Righteousness, could only do so by proposing a reconciliation, by setting forth an Atonement. The Atonement is set forth in the Son of God and Son of man, who in declaring His relation to us, and making Himself one with us in our sin and darkness, shews us the Father loving us, Himself owning us as beloved brothers, whose flesh and blood He is not ashamed to partake. To receive and welcome the Atonement is to *be* reconciled to God; to renounce blindness and ignorance, distrust and suspicion, in the presence of our Father; to say, We have sinned against Thee; but Thou art our Father and our Maker; forgive us, love us, take us for Thy children, as Thou hast declared it to be Thy will and purpose to do. To accept the Atonement, must be to give thanks to God and the Father for all things, but above all for the gift of His beloved Son; to cherish the thought of our relation to Him, to meditate on His nature, to approach the Father by His side; to condemn ourselves for all feelings of repugnance and suspicion that may rise in our hearts at the thought of God and heavenly things; to hate ourselves for every transgression

of God's beneficent law by which we set ourselves in opposition to Him on whom we ought to be depending. The result of such receiving of the Grace of God *must be* a dying to sin; it must be a living unto righteousness.

Brethren, I have heard the preaching of the *Sacraments* contrasted with the preaching of the *Atonement*. But what if the preaching of the Atonement, as we have been regarding it, be the great office of the Sacraments themselves? What if one great fault of Christian teaching has been that it has obscured the Sacraments, and prevented them from speaking out their own meanings? The Atonement, as we have seen reason to believe, is, on God's side, the free forgiveness of our sins, the claiming us as children restored to His favour. The object of the Atonement is to quicken us with the life of Christ, and make us live daily unto righteousness. According to the old interpretation of Christian Baptism, it is a Baptism for the remission of sins. It tells of our adoption into the rights of the sons of God, of the regeneration by which God in heaven has begotten us to be His children. The Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ is ordained that we may be fed with the very life of God in our spirits. It testifies by its continual recurrence, that the Christian has a life which is not of the world, that if he sinks into the

animal, worldly, selfish life, he is renouncing his birthright, and trampling upon the Atonement, and calling the blood of the Covenant with which he has been consecrated to the worship of God, an unholy thing. What preacher of the Gospel, do you suppose, will ever rival the Sacraments which Christ Himself has made His preachers? "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye shew, or publish, the death of Christ till He come." Let this solemn thought possess our minds, Christian brethren,—that our life and profession are founded on the Atonement of the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. Our fathers believed in that Atonement; they offered their children to God in the strength of it. It is ours either to rejoice in it, or else to repudiate it. We have not to make a Reconciliation. We have not to devise theories concerning it. God has taken the initiative: He has laid forgiveness as a foundation beneath us. He who made us has also redeemed us: He appeals to our hearts and our consciences, inviting us to His favour, exhorting us to live according to His will, revealing to us the blessed hope which there is in Christ our Head for ourselves and for the world. He calls us to come to Him, with our households and with our fellow-men. He shews us that enmity to Him is also enmity amongst ourselves; that those who

blind themselves to Him by a sensual life are injuring their neighbours and destroying themselves. He calls us out of strife into peace, out of darkness into light, out of slavery into freedom. Once let us accept the Gospel of our redemption, the message that we are pardoned children of one Father; and this conviction working from the core of our spirits outwards, will begin a long struggle with all that is base and unworthy in our nature and our practices, and being continually nourished by the blessed Spirit who is an active Spirit of sonship within us, it will not end till it has brought us into a peaceful harmony with the mind of Christ, and has trained us through a participation in His humility and sacrifice to a fellowship with His joy and triumph.

SERMON III.

KNOWING AFTER THE FLESH.

2 Corinthians V. 16.

"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh."

WHEN we hear St Paul making this paradoxical assertion, that he will know no man after the flesh, perhaps our first impulse, and certainly the best way of arriving at his meaning, is to ask, 'How then would he know men? Supposing that to know men after the flesh was some natural habit which he was renouncing, what was the new habit which he had learned?' Now if we were to read the foregoing part of this Epistle to the Corinthians with that question in our minds, we should gather without difficulty a very sufficient answer to it; and when we had become familiar with St Paul's view of man or men, we should be better able to understand that knowledge after the

flesh which he puts in contrast with his own new knowledge.

We cannot thus go through the whole of the Epistle up to our text; but we may consider a few verses, taking those which are nearest; and we shall find, I think, some clear hints of what the Apostle means. In ver. 9, St Paul says that his great desire was to be well-pleasing to the Lord. "For we must all appear," he says, "before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." The next words are not very well rendered. Let me ask your attention, brethren, to the true meaning of them. Instead of 'terror' it is better to read 'fear,' and we must lay an emphasis on '*men*,' so as to oppose 'men' to 'God.' "Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade *men*, but are made manifest unto *God*." St Paul means that he remembered for himself that *he* must give account before the judgment-seat of Christ; so the fear of the Lord was not unknown to him. What he did, he did with the awful remembrance of Christ's judgment in his thoughts. And having this fear of his unseen Master and Judge before his eyes, he set himself to persuade *men*, as one whose heart was open to *God*. The best comment on these words, and the best ex-

planation of 'the persuading of men,' is to be found at the beginning of the 4th chapter. "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not: but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." St Paul had a treasure to impart to men. He had the truth of God's glorious unveiling of Himself in the loving Saviour to convey to the minds of his fellow-men. He was anxious therefore to persuade men. But he could only do so as in the sight of God. There must be nothing crafty or self-interested, no trick or sophistry, in his attempts to persuade. His persuading of men must be honest and single-minded, a striving to enlighten them with the Divine light of a Gospel which was no fiction, but true as the laws of the universe. St Paul then, fearing the Lord, addressed himself with his message and with entreaties to men, as one whose secret thoughts were entirely open to God. He adds, "I trust also we are made manifest in your consciences." In one sense he could say, It was a very small thing with him how men judged him. But when the question came, how he was regarded by those

whom he loved as his own soul, to whom he had carried his glorious Gospel, and who were bound to him by a common faith, he could not feel indifferent to their appreciation of him. Who could have felt indifferent in such a case? Who would think any better of St Paul if he had cared nothing for what the Corinthians thought of him? He would not believe that his integrity was not transparent to their eyes: he was sure that his sincerity must have commended itself to their insight. But this honest and honourable anxiety to be rightly understood by those whom we love and serve is a very delicate feeling, and may easily be confounded with egotism and a desire to glorify ourselves: nay, it may easily be corrupted into its base counterfeit. But St Paul knew that he was not glorifying himself in a spirit of vanity. It was *sympathy*, not vanity, that moved him. "We commend not ourselves again unto you; what we wish is to give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance and not in heart." There were those at Corinth who were trying to undermine St Paul's legitimate influence and authority by making the worst of some external disadvantages under which he laboured. His true authority was that of the Spirit, stirring in his own heart

and acting on the hearts of others. He had therefore been bringing into view the spiritual bonds and relations which he had in common with the Corinthians. These spiritual powers, the authority which had its sphere in the heart and affections, might be considered and cherished by his friends at Corinth. He loved to glory in *them;* they by the same right might glory in *him.* In ch. i. 14, he says, "As ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus." Therefore he was willing to protest concerning his motives and the spirit of his service, and to appeal to what they could not but acknowledge of him, in order that they might not be ashamed of him, but might be able to be proud of their teacher and thankful for him. "For," he proceeds, "whether we were beside ourselves, it was to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your sakes." By 'being beside himself' the Apostle seems to denote that eagerness, that jealous and almost passionate appeal to the sympathy of his brethren, which he elsewhere speaks of as 'foolish.' No doubt the very necessity of speaking of himself made him feel excited and disturbed. Compare what he says at the beginning of the 11th chapter, "Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and

indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy." There is no feeling mind which will not see something singularly touching and noble in this agitation which, when these personal matters are in the Apostle's mind, troubles his utterance and makes no form of expression quite satisfactory to him. "I have become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me." He feels it unnatural to be asserting himself: he calls it being beside himself. But in consenting for a time to this excitement, he is not putting self in the place of God. If he has been beside himself in protesting and appealing and glorying, so that some base persons might mock at his confusion and vehemence, it was to God. He was all the time holding himself as a servant of God, bound to care for God's glory and not his own. That excitation, however, was temporary. He could commonly control himself and be sober. In that ordinary state he was equally bound up with his brethren. He did not subside from the agitation of sympathy into the calm of a calculating selfishness. No, when he was most calm,—when prudence had its greatest power with him, it was equally his principle not to live for himself. It was his abiding law not to live in himself and for himself, but in and for others.

Then we arrive at the *ground* upon which these

feelings and habits rested. Let us recall the feelings and habits, and then observe the ground of them distinctly. St Paul felt in the bottom of his soul that he was responsible to God: the task committed to him was to communicate to men a Gospel concerning God, and so to draw men to God. He lived to God and to men. His desire was that all should be as one man, with hearts open to God, and rejoicing in one another. This was his ideal; it was a grief to him when that ideal was denied and outraged.

Now, what gave him this ideal? He tells us in the next verse. "For the love of Christ constraineth us." 'The love which Christ has manifested covers and embraces us with a binding force;—this being the judgment we formed when we learnt that love, that if one died for all, then all died,—His death was the death of all: and He died for all, that the living should no longer live to themselves, but to Him who died and rose again for them. Wherefore we, from this time forwards, know no man after the flesh.'

I hope, brethren, that after even the brief consideration we have been able to give to a few of St Paul's words, we shall all be ready to say,—No, those relations with men, those aspects of human life and concerns, which St Paul brings before us, are certainly not what we could call

"knowing men after the flesh." The Apostle evidently finds the centre of his own existence and of the existence of his brother-men in another world, not in this; in a world to which the flesh does not belong, in the world of spirits. It may be a mystical theory, it may be fanciful, it may be credulous; but St Paul's theory of human existence is manifestly not "after the flesh." He recognizes a call to live out of himself, to live to God, to live to other men. He is thus drawn out of himself,—made a servant of God whose aim is to please his Master, and a servant of men whose aim is not to please them but to bring them to God,—by the controlling and organizing power of the Son of God, who proved His love of men and His fellowship with them, by dying and rising again for them. A man who believes in that love so acting, must have quite a peculiar conception of the law and theory of human existence.

He who saw humanity thus transfigured was living amongst men whose views were totally different from his. What kind of views would be most unlike St Paul's? Let us try a comparison. The mainspring of conduct, with St Paul, was a desire to please the Lord. He had a conviction that all the secret workings of the inner man were naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom

men had to do. There might be those who felt no such mainspring, who had no such conviction, who knew of no Loving One out of their sight, to whom the pulse of their conscious being might beat in answer. They might regard each man as a law to himself. Knowing of no judgment, they might be unacquainted with any fear of the Lord. They might cover up the secrets of a foul heart as if no eye saw them. They might set before their eyes the gratification of the predominant impulse stirring in their flesh, as that for which at each moment they were to live. That would seem like knowing man after the flesh.

Again, those who were thus opposed to St Paul might see in their fellow-men only rivals or instruments. They might have no reverence for them, such as would prevent them from struggling against their neighbour as a rival, or from using him as an instrument, in their pleasures or ambitions. They might know nothing of any mysterious tie binding all men together, and making each the servant and helper of the rest. They might see in their neighbours, not spiritual beings, created to love and serve and worship, but children of the dust, created,—no, not created,—coming casually into existence, to lead a life of happy or unprosperous competition. We should readily describe that view of men as a knowing them after

the flesh. We should feel how utterly alien that must be from the view of St Paul, who saw all men bound into one by the Dying and Living Love of the Son of God.

Here then we have a twofold contrast to St Paul's twofold aspect of humanity. With St Paul the individual man belongs to God and to his fellow-men, through Christ. With those most opposite to him, the individual man has himself for his aim, his fellow-men for tools or obstacles.

But we are prevented from giving *only* this extreme interpretation to the words "knowing men after the flesh," by the sentence which follows. "If we have even known Christ after the flesh, henceforth we know Him so no more." There has been much discussion as to what this knowledge of Christ after the flesh, which St Paul renounces, could be. Some say, it means that whereas Christ had been known rather as a man, He was in future to be known as God. Others infer from this passage that St Paul accuses himself of having preached for some time a more carnal kind of doctrine concerning Christ, and was now renouncing that doctrine, the characteristic features of the more fleshly teaching being the expectation of an appearing of Christ in that day, and other of what are called the Judaising views of the mission of Christ. But the objection to

the first is that St Paul certainly would not resolve to know Jesus Christ the *less* as a *man*, because he knew Him as God. The objection to the second is, that there are no genuine proofs of any renunciation by St Paul of the first Gospel he had preached concerning Christ. A common objection to both interpretations is that they do not agree with the context, and especially with the words immediately preceding, "I know *no* MAN after the flesh."

Let us keep to the same plan of interpretation that we have used so far. We considered how St Paul *did* know *men;* let us see how he also did know *Christ.* He regarded men, we saw, as bound into one body in Christ by the Divine love. He regarded them as governed by the law of a Body, each member to live not for himself only but for the service of the Body, all rejoicing together, and all suffering together. Any common view differing from this might be a knowledge of men according to the flesh. Now that view of men plainly involves a correlative view of Christ. If men were bound together in Christ, Christ was binding them together. If they were Members, He was a Head. If they were in Him, He contained them. If they were united by Him to the Father, He was a bond uniting them to the Father. Here, then, is a certain

knowledge of Christ. Christ is known as the Mediator, the Redeemer, the Head and Representative of mankind, expressing the love of the Father towards men, declaring His Forgiveness to men, uniting them in Himself to the Father.

Now a man who had not adopted St Paul's spiritual and heavenly view of men, but regarded them still in some way after the flesh, could not be holding St Paul's view of Christ. He might choose from more than one way of regarding Christ; he might consider Him as a mere man, whose pretensions to differ from other men were assumed or mistaken. He might acknowledge some superior nature in Him: he might even in a barren way be acknowledging Him as the only-begotten Son of God; but if he saw no living and heavenly bond between Christ and mankind, he was not a fellow-disciple of St Paul's, he was not seeing into the invisible world with St Paul's eyes. His knowledge of Christ, so long as Christ was to him a Person separated from the Body of humanity, was what St Paul would have described as a knowledge after the flesh.

St Paul does not very positively attribute to himself at a former time such a knowledge of Christ. He speaks as if he possibly might have so thought of Christ. No doubt at times, even

after his conversion, the bond uniting Jesus Christ to men became faint and almost invisible to him. The knowledge of that bond, the great spiritual image of a Redeemed Humanity with a living Redeemer at the head of it, had come to him through a revelation; and it is not probable that he was sustained at one unchanging level of spiritual knowledge. That his knowledge of Christ had a perpetual tendency to become carnal, is what seems to me to be implied by his words. He condemns this tendency and makes a firm resolution for the future, when he says, "If I have known even Christ after the flesh, henceforth I know Him so no more"—no, neither Him, nor men. Henceforth, to him who was living by faith in the Son of God, men should not be separate individuals with separate aims and interests; Christ should not be a separate individual, however Divine. There should be one Body, Christ the Head of it, men the members, all of them members one of another.

If any one had begun, as was so likely, to remonstrate with the Apostle by saying, 'But this is a strange and novel theory,'—he would have answered, 'That is precisely what I say myself—If any one is *in Christ*, this is a new creation: it is a constitution or ordering of the relative conditions and destinies of men which was not recog-

nized before, which could not be clearly apprehended without a knowledge of Christ. When Christ is seen to be the living Head of a redeemed mankind, old things are passed away, all things are become new.' Those are the words which follow our text. They express St Paul's sense of the mighty difference between the aspect of human existence as seen from a worldly point of view, and the aspect of it as seen from the heavenly point of view. They warn us that if any thing strikes us as new or strange in a fair and full understanding of such passages, this is no argument, I do not say against the truth of what St Paul asserts, but against the probability of that having been his deep conviction.

It is a matter of deep interest to us, dear brethren, to become familiar with St Paul's views, to know well what he actually taught and believed. But then a question of still greater moment presents itself to us: Is what he held *true?* If it was true for him when he wrote, is it true for us who read now? Let not the answer, If it is in the Bible, of course it is true, be made an occasion for putting a stop to our earnest consideration of the question. If that thought—of a human race redeemed by the Son of man and the Head of every man, bound together by the Divine power

and law of His love—is clear in your mental conceptions, if you see that it is the key of St Paul's life and theories, let me entreat you to keep it steadily before you, and to compare with it the 'knowledge of men' or theory of human existence, upon which you find yourselves acting in the commerce of daily life. You will find, I think, that you are partly adopting that view, and partly not; that you sometimes act upon it, sometimes deny it. Then ask yourselves what acts of your life, what thoughts of your heart, are in harmony with it, and what contradict it. See whether in all your better moments you do not gladly acknowledge yourselves as objects of an Infinite Divine love, which you must serve, and as helpers and ministers of your fellow-men. See whether the reverence you feel for the spiritual dignity of a fellow-creature, whenever you are doing your duty by your neighbour, is not a natural fruit of the new creation which makes all men members of Christ. See whether your worst feelings do not involve contempt for your fellow-men; whether your own conscience approves your acts, when you think of any human being as an obstacle in the way of your selfishness, or as a tool for the gratification of it. Think whether a full and cordial apprehension of the truth by which St Paul lived

would not justify and support all that is honourable and useful in life, whether it would not sentence and kill the very impulses and maxims which are most hurtful to ourselves and to the world.

Prove your own selves, brethren, and see whether there is not a Christ in you, whether you are not in Christ. Let not the god of this world, the power of the flesh, blind your eyes, so that the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, may not shine upon them. Cling to your baptismal birthright, and repent of the dishonour you have cast upon it. Let the humbling pride of being members of Christ be ever with you to oppose the entrance of all that is mean and greedy and lustful into your hearts. Be willing to give thanks always for all things to God and the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus. See the ground of all human relations in God, the law of all visible and earthly things in the heavenly kingdom. Let every duty be done as to God; and let the refreshment of every duty be the joy of pleasing the Lord.

Whatever weight of human authority or custom may set itself against God's own voice speaking to you in your heart of hearts, let it have the influence it deserves, let it be cast out as nothing. If the whole world is against God, we had better

be on God's side. Let us remember the judgment. We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, who will ask us whether we have known Himself and His members after the flesh, or as He has taught us to know them. Let us receive the fear of that loving Lord, and let us yield ourselves to the constraining voice which says, Be ye reconciled to God.

SERMON IV.

SACRIFICE.

HEBREWS X. 19.

"We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."

I PROPOSE to speak this morning, brethren, of the nature of the Sacrifices offered under the Mosaic Law, and of the fulfilment of these in the Sacrifice of the Son of God; following the interpretation of this subject which is given us in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

When I was endeavouring lately to set forth the nature of the Atonement effected by Jesus Christ, I scarcely spoke of sacrifice, because I wished to present in as clear and unembarrassed a form as I could the great simple truths of God's forgiving love and of that law of death unto life, which we behold in Christ our Head. It was not that I was not well aware how frequently

the death of Christ is represented as a sacrifice, or how decidedly the sacred writers declare the sacrifices of the Jewish law to have been fulfilled in the sacrifice of Christ, and superseded by the manifestation of this sacrifice. On the contrary, I feel that every expositor of the teaching of the Scriptures concerning the death of Christ is bound to pay particular attention to the properly *sacrificial* aspect of that death, and to use the light thrown by the institute of sacrifice as a most important aid in understanding the meaning of it.

I have this further reason for entering upon this subject,—that the view against which I protested, viz. that the sentence of God's violated law against sinners was satisfactorily carried out in the slaying of the sinless, is said to be particularly required by the doctrine of sacrifice. It has been said, 'The language of the New Testament concerning the redemption undoubtedly appears to represent God's forgiveness as being perfectly free and independent of any payment. The death of Christ seems to be spoken of as God's method of reconciling and giving life to the world, and not as a condition which enabled Him to excuse some men their punishment. But do not the sacrifices of the Jewish law set forth the punishment of a substitute? Does not the slain animal represent that God requires a life, and must punish a victim,

but that some other victim may be accepted in place of the man who is himself the offender? And are we not required to interpret the death of Christ in accordance with the nature of those Jewish sacrifices?'

Now, in seeking to answer these questions, there are two parts of the Sacred Book to which we should especially have recourse. The books of Moses, and particularly that of Leviticus, give us the actual rules of sacrifice in the Jewish commonwealth. The Epistle to the Hebrews, and expressly in its 9th and 10th chapters, undertakes to expound the Christian view of sacrifice, and to shew how the sacrifice of Christ superseded, by fulfilling, the sacrifices of the law. There can be no discussion of the subject anywhere, possessing more authority to the Christian, than the discussion which we find in these chapters.

Let me speak briefly, first, of the general meaning and efficacy of the sacrifices of the Old World, and then refer to the doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

I. The most general notion of sacrifice seems to be, beyond dispute, that of an *offering*. 'A priest must of necessity have something to *offer*.' Cain and Abel, in the first recorded instance of sacrifice, are said to have brought 'offerings' unto the Lord. Throughout all religious language, the

terms sacrifice and offering are used to describe the same thing. *Oblation* is only another form of the word offering; and it is quite needless, I believe, to remind you, by instances, how frequently either 'offering' or 'oblation' is used in connection with, or as a substitute for, the word sacrifice. Amidst all the legitimate variations, and all the perversions, which may be classed under the one head of sacrifice, this simplest notion is never wanting: the sacrifice is an *offering* presented by the worshipper to a Divine Power.

The bull, or the goat, or the lamb, brought up to the altar, and put to death there by consecrated hands, is not to be any less thought of as an offering, than the unbloody sacrifice, the fruit of the ground, the oil or the wine. The worshipper gives them, of what is his, to his God. This character, at least, Jewish and heathen sacrifices have in common. For sacrifices, both of slain victims, and of other possessions, have been universal throughout the world. In some shape or other, all nations have made offerings to the gods whom they worshipped. When the Israelites began to offer sacrifice, they were only following the general custom of the nations round about them. And the most elementary feeling in the minds of all when they brought their sacrifices, must have been that they were bringing something which they

hoped would be acceptable to the power to whom it was offered.

It has been urged, on the other hand, that the killing of a tame animal was something so unnatural, that we cannot imagine its being done under the impulse of a desire to make an offering. It is contended that it must have been an *arbitrary symbol*, appointed by God without any reference to the common instinct of sacrifice, in order to prefigure the slaying of Christ. Now to ourselves, it must be confessed, it would be a very unnatural mode of worship to put a bull or a goat to death. The more natural offering, to us, would be that of a guinea or a hundred guineas. But surely to Abel, the keeper of sheep, who killed one of his flock as a gift to his father or his brother, it was not so unnatural to kill a sheep as an offering to God; not to Abel, nor to his early successors upon the earth. To kill an animal must have been, to persons in their condition, a very simple way of making an offering. And the incessant application, throughout Scripture, of the term *offering* to sacrifices of that kind, is sufficient to shew, that whatever else was signified by the slaying of an animal,—and much else was signified,—there was no exclusion of the common universal notion which regarded every sacrifice as an offering to God.

Let this then be clear to us, brethren, that

every sacrifice has the elementary principle of an *offering* in it.

Having seen this, we are bound, undoubtedly, to perceive something different in the slaying of an animal from what we perceive in the presenting of a sheaf of corn at the altar. We have no declaration, however, in the books of Moses, concerning the intended significance of a blood-sacrifice in general. This is a fact to which I would call your attention. Particular victims are to be offered in connection with particular sins; but what is meant by the slaying of the victim appears to be left to the common human instincts to reflect upon. This only is emphatically stated, that the *blood* is a symbol of the *life*. The shedding of blood is the pouring out of life; the sprinkling with blood is a sprinkling with life.

The question of the general meaning of a blood-sacrifice being left thus open by the Law of Moses, every one has a right to suggest what was most probably the impression on the minds of worshippers when they brought an animal to be slain or burnt at the altar. It must have been the Divine purpose to allow this act to foster and express freely in the mind of the worshipper any feeling, without limitation, which was not inconsistent with God's own character and the true relation of the worshipper towards Him. If, therefore, we repre-

sent to ourselves any feelings which might naturally go with an act of sacrifice, we should be careful not to put these forward, or to regard them as the *only* legitimate feelings corresponding to sacrifice. With this caution, I will just mention some such feelings.

(1) Considering that the power to whom the sacrifice was offered was an *invisible* Power, living and ruling in that unseen world which surrounds this visible life of men, the *death* of the sacrifice would naturally express an act of intercourse with the unseen Being. It was like knocking at the door of the invisible world. It can scarcely be doubted that a stronger sense of a real communion with the spiritual world and its inhabitants would go with the offering of the *life* of a victim than with the presenting of fruits.

(2) Again: under the Law of Moses, the worshipper was *to put his hand upon the head* of his offering. This expressed what must have been another common feeling in those who offered victims: this, namely;—that the worshipper identified himself with his offering. That injunction is continually repeated; "he shall put his hand, or lay his hand, upon the head of his offering," and then it shall be slain. This must have meant, 'This is *my* offering; I, my feelings, my conscience, go with it into the presence of

the Unseen. I lay myself at the feet of the God whom I worship.' You will admit, I think, brethren, that the slaying of an animal would call out this feeling in the worshipper's mind, of giving himself with the offering, far more strongly than the presenting of flour or oil or frankincense.

Perhaps those two feelings are the simplest and most universal that would go with a blood sacrifice. Many other thoughts would be suggested to one and another amongst worshippers, and especially in connection with their views of the nature of the Being to whom they offered. They might be led to dwell on the mystery of *life*, on the tenure by which man holds his life at the hands of the supreme power; of the inferiority and subordination of the *animal* life to the *human* life; of the obligation resting upon a man to devote his whole life to the service of God. Thoughts like these, and many others, had room given them to germinate freely out of the contemplation of sacrifice, from the very fact that no authoritative interpretation of the meaning of a sacrifice, as presented by man, was given in the Law.

'As presented by man.'—But this presentation by man was not the chief part of a sacrifice under the Law of Moses. The *acceptance of it by God*

was far more important. When an Israelite had sinned, he was to offer an appointed sacrifice in an appointed way, and then the word of God was, It shall be accepted for him, to make atonement for him. The institution of sacrifice, the slaying of animals, was not peculiar to the Jewish people. It was the general custom of the nations. When God gave this law to Moses, the work of the Lawgiver was not to *ordain* sacrifices, but to *regulate* them. The acceptance and peace promised to those who offered according to the will and commandment of God was the special blessing of the Covenant.

Is there any necessity to ask *how* or *why* God forgave and accepted such a worshipper? We see a transgressor coming to God with a confession of sin: he says, 'I have sinned against God, I wish to present an offering to Him, to be accepted by Him, and to return into His favour.' God pardons the repentant, confessing, and obedient sinner. In appointing the exact method of sacrifice, He gave the strongest token to the people that He Himself wished them to return after transgression into His favour. He shewed that their repentance was of His seeking, that it was He who was always calling and urging them to be at peace with Himself. Man is shewn to us exhibiting his repentance and submission

through a significant offering: God is shewn to us acting according to His own infinite goodness, first prompting and then accepting man's prayer for pardon and peace.

II. Now let us turn, dear brethren, to the great Sacrifice in which these sacrifices were fulfilled, and by which they were done away,—the sacrifice of the Death of Christ.

And, following the order of our thoughts about those Levitical Sacrifices, I observe,

(1) That it was *an offering*. Every high-priest was ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; it was therefore necessary that the great High-Priest should offer somewhat. Through the Eternal Spirit *He offered Himself* without spot to God. I need not repeat the numerous expressions in Scripture to the same effect. Now I beg you to notice, brethren, that this language expresses the properly sacrificial character of Christ's death. And I call attention to it for this reason: we are told that Christ's death *being a sacrifice*, must on *that account* have been the punishment of a substitute in place of the real offender. But when the Scriptures speak of Christ's death as a sacrifice, they say not a word,—I speak confidently,—of the punishment of a substitute for the satisfaction of a violated law. They speak of Christ as offering Himself in His death and sacrifice to God.

That is the proper description of His sacrifice; and it even excludes, I submit, the idea of punishment by substitution. It is not said that Christ surrendered Himself to be punished in sacrifice. The *giving up* of Himself *was* the sacrifice; and this giving up was consummated in His bloody death.

(2) In the second place, it is a very prominent statement in Holy Scripture, that Christ, in dying, opened the gates of death; that He went into the Holiest, that is, into the very presence of the Eternal God, for man; that He made for us a new and living way into that presence. I reminded you how the offering to God of the life of an animal seemed to open a door into the invisible world, and to symbolize the possibility of a real communion between this visible world, and the awful unseen which surrounds and enfolds it. In this respect such a sacrifice is a type of the sacrifice of Christ. He is revealed to us as having laid down His life that He might take it again; as having gone to the Father Himself, that He might be the way for other men to the Father. He is the living bond between the two worlds, between Earth and Heaven, between the very and eternal God and mortal men. This, brethren, is a most important aspect of the sacrificial character of the death of Christ.

(3) Thirdly, I reminded you that, under the Law of Moses, the confessing sinner was solemnly required to lay his hand upon the head of his offering, and we saw in this act an expression of the sinner's wish to connect himself with the offerings, and to lay down his own spirit with the victim's life at the feet of God. Similarly, Christ, as a sacrifice, bears us and our sins. The Epistle to the Hebrews says much of the ways in which the Son of God identified Himself with us, in order that we might be able to identify ourselves with Him, and to lay our hands reverently upon Him as the great sacrifice. "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same." "We have not an high-priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but He was, in all points, tempted like as we are." "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." And thus He bore the sins of many. Every sinner who has his daily sins and the sin of his whole being to confess to God, may come to God's altar, laying his hand upon Christ the Son of God, knowing that Christ will not cast him off, but makes his cause His own. The worshipper of old sought to offer his own conscience to God with his offering; we are invited to offer our bur-

dened consciences to God with and upon Him who offered Himself once for all.

(4) But we saw that what gave value to the Israelite's offering was that God Himself both ordained and accepted it. In this lay its power of atonement. It could make peace between the transgressor and his God, because it embodied and expressed God's forgiveness.

Now, of all the truths that concern the death of Christ, none is brought more forward or insisted upon more strongly than this,—that the Father Himself sent His Son, and accepted His offering. The sacrifice was prepared and welcomed by God Himself. In this lies its power of Atonement. His word, on coming into the world, was this, 'Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.' "By the which will we are sanctified." God's will brought His Son into the world. When He was in the flesh, to do His Father's will was His meat and drink. When He drank the cup of agony, His prayer was, Not my will, but Thine be done. When He gave up the ghost to His Father upon the cross, God was well pleased with Him, and was glorified in Him. From the grave He was raised up and exalted by the Father, and for ever sat down on the right hand of God.

This then, dear brethren, as we have seen before, is the great value to us of the sacrifice of

Christ. It reconciles us to the Father. We are forgiven and accepted in Christ. In Him we have the remission of our sins. Sending His Son into the world, giving Him up that He might offer Himself for us, accepting Him as our Head and Representative into His own presence and love, the Father says to us, Your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more. He says this out of the fulness of His own love, and He says it freely and without hindrance. He does not say that He will not *punish*, according to His own wisdom; He forgives independently of punishment. He can forgive before an adequate punishment has been inflicted; and He will punish after He has forgiven, when He sees it to be advantageous. He admits us into the condition of children beloved and cared for.

It is this great truth of the forgiveness of sins which makes the language of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews what it is when he speaks of the sacrifice of Christ. You may observe that he speaks throughout of purging, cleansing, purifying. The great object of sacrifice, according to him, is not to provide a punishment, but to effect a purgation. In ch. i. 3, he says that "Christ, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high." Ch. ix. 13, 14, "If the blood of bulls and of

goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the *purifying* of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, *purge* your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" vv. 22, 23, "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be *purified* with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." And there are other expressions in the discussion in these chapters which are equivalent to purgation: I mean those of making the worshipper *perfect*, and of *sanctifying* or consecrating. The meaning in each case is the same. The worshipper who is purged, made perfect, sanctified, or consecrated, is brought without defilement into a holy place, into the sanctuary of God's presence.

The sacred writer reasons and expounds according to the following view. He regards *sin* as a pollution of the conscience, which keeps a man away from the presence and the worship of God. The object of sacrifice is to remove this pollution of the conscience. The power which can alone cleanse the conscience is the forgiving love and acceptance of God Himself brought home to the

heart. The one necessity for man and the highest privilege to which he can aspire is, to be at peace and in communion with God. When this communion is broken, as it is broken by sin, which in its essence is departure from God, the man is unclean, and so far as his conscience is alive and awake, he is *conscious* of defilement. Sin, or departure from God, is in the nature of things, a pollution; and it is impossible for a sinner to think of the true God at all, and to have the faintest desire of being at peace with Him, without the *sense* of sin, which is the sense of not being pure enough for the presence of God, being stirred within him. Thus therefore the sacred writer holds: Man's true evil is sin, or departure from the living God; because his true glory is fellowship with the living God. The sinner desirous of returning to God becomes conscious of defilement; the great work of Christ's sacrifice is to remove the defilement, and to lead back the sorrowing but trusting sinner into peace with the Father. The sacrifice of Christ does this because He is the Son whom the Father sent to redeem the world; because when He came into the world He bore and He still bears our sins; because sharing in the flesh and blood of sinful humanity, and having learnt sympathy and become perfect through temptation, He has been received as the Son of man

into the holiest, which is the Father's love and confidence, and sits down for ever pleading our cause at the Father's right hand.

That, my brethren, is the teaching of this Epistle and of the other Holy Scriptures concerning the sacrifice of the death of Christ; that is the teaching of our own Church. I am speaking, you remember, of one aspect of Christ's death,—that in which it answered to and fulfilled the sacrifices of the Law given by Moses. Look for yourselves at as many passages as you will in either the Bible or the Prayer-Book relating to this one subject, and see whether you find a single plain word which tells you of the punishment of a substitute for our sins. Instead of this perplexing and unworthy notion, you will find the grand and glorious truths of the cleansing of the conscience; of the winning of the sinner back to peace and hope through a frank and lively trust in God; of the way to the Father which was made clear and straight for every man, when Jesus the undefiled, the sin-bearer, went up from our guilty world, out of the midst of our darkest pollutions, full of sympathy and love, into the presence of a Father who was glorified in His devotion to men.

Brethren, can I wish, can any man wish who knows the evil of sin and ignorance and distrust of God, the blessedness of confiding in God and

submitting to Him and obeying Him, that we should lose sight of the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, of the infinite blessings procured to us by the shedding of His precious blood? Nay, I would testify by God's help and in His Name, that the strength of our hope for ourselves and for the world will be sustained only by our contemplation of the death of Christ, and by the belief that it was a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction made to the Father on our behalf. Can it be nothing, or a small thing to us, that we are thoroughly assured of the good will towards us of Him who made and governs us and this strange and alarming world in which we find ourselves? Is it nothing that One, in perfect unity with Him, who mixed with our sins without shrinking in disgust from the sinner, who testified in all ways that the deeper the sin the more compassionately He desired to rescue the sinner, came thus to mix with us by the Father's own desire, and has gone to the Father to prepare room for us in the same home of trust and communion, and calls upon us to come, distrusting ourselves and trembling in ourselves, but hopeful with Him and confident in His goodness and worthiness, into the Father's open presence? Do you think that an assured belief in the glory of knowing God, in the defiling nature of sin, in the possibility for

every man of leading a life of dependence upon the unseen but living and loving God, would have no beneficial effect upon society, upon our own souls? Is the image of Christ the Son of God, coming down from heaven, living amongst men and dying by their hands, but raised up for their deliverance and blessing them evermore in turning them from their iniquities, a feeble and unreal image, from which we in our enlightenment may as well turn away our eyes, in order to dwell on calculations of prudence and maxims of philosophy and traditions of civilization? Two experiences, brethren, will teach us the truth. One is that of the weakness and hollowness of mere maxims and traditions and calculations in the day of trial, in the hour of darkness; the other is that of the power of Christ our Saviour, who gave Himself for us, strengthening us by His unveiling of the Father's love, and by His ministration of the Spirit's gracious influences. Let it be the hope and endeavour of all who believe in the sacrifice of the death of Christ, not only to feel the support of it in themselves, but to be witnesses of its redeeming and sanctifying efficacy to the world around them. God grant us this blessing and glory for His Son Jesus Christ's sake!

SERMON V.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.

REVELATION I. 5, 6.

"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

THE story which belongs especially to Good Friday, and which, though we read it often at other times, seems to be brought before us most livingly to-day, must always be a painful and humiliating one. It is a record of human wickedness and folly and shame. Every reader of it, who knows what it is to be touched by the glory or the disgrace of his kind, even though that glory or disgrace may be attached to a distant age and country, must feel something like a wish that that page could be blotted out of human history. It tells us what men will do in their worst moments; how rulers and priests may be possessed by fierce jealousy and resentment against

one better than themselves; how mobs may be swayed and driven into brutal cruelty by a false cry; how the sight of patient suffering will exasperate the hatred of persecutors; how righteousness may be trampled upon by a man who sits to administer justice, and innocent blood may be shed to gratify powerful malignity. Unhappily these are no uncommon features in the works of men. The deeds done at Jerusalem on the day of the Crucifixion are by no means the most frightful, for cruelty and tyranny, that we can read of. But they do belong—read simply as a piece of history—to that class of deeds which make us feel ashamed of our common human nature.

It often happens, however, that at the same time that we are compelled to blush at the crimes of our fellow-men, we have reason to be proud of their nobleness. If the tyrant is brutal, the victim may be serene and magnanimous. Constancy shines against persecution; gentleness and sympathy are proved by cruelty and wrong. This is part of the common experience of mankind. This contrast, the most unconcerned reader would perceive, comes out with unusual strength in the narrative of our Lord's Passion. His dignity and patience, His forgiving tenderness, shew how *good* man may be, whilst His murderers are proving how base and cruel men may be.

The goodness of Jesus thus makes the whole picture almost welcome. And when we behold that goodness in the light of what we know of His nature and His work, we can understand how it is that the feeling of thankfulness almost overpowers that of horror, that an almost jubilant tone may be detected in the outpourings of those who look, with moistened eyes, upon the Cross; how it is that this day of shame is yet greeted as *Good* Friday.

The words of my text are surely fit words for this day's meditations. Yet they sound like a song of triumph. They ascribe dominion and glory to Him who was mocked, scourged, spit upon, crucified. The fact that He underwent these sufferings is the very ground of the thanksgiving and adoration.

And beyond question, it was a day of triumph. That season of agony, that hour of darkness, was the moment of the supreme triumph of love and forgiveness. We are commemorating a triumph to-day. We are bound so to regard it and proclaim it; only we must take care to understand it aright, and then, whilst we shall still partake of the feelings which greet a triumph, our very thanksgivings will lay hold of our consciences, and we shall worship with awe and fear.

As we stand before the Cross, we glorify Him

who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and the Father. The *Love* was the cause and ground of all the rest. The pardon of our sins, the pledge of that pardon, the privileges which rise out of it, are due to Love, and are continually sustained by Love. Let us think this morning of our being cleansed by the blood of Christ, and of the royalty and priesthood of which the washing with that blood has made us inheritors,—remembering all the while, and may God help us to feel it more deeply, that the Eternal Divine Love, unbought, undeserved, unconquerable, is the sole ultimate ground upon which our hopes and our privileges can rest.

Jesus Christ 'washed us from our sins in His own blood.' It is customary, and may in a subordinate degree be helpful, to think of sin as a *twofold* evil from which we need to be delivered. We speak of the *guilt* of sin, and of its *power* or hold upon us; of that in it which is offensive in the eyes of our Father in heaven, and of that which fetters us and makes us miserable. The distinction thus made is not strongly marked in Holy Scripture, though it is a very natural one, and may be inferred from many passages in which the inspired preachers or writers speak of our redemption. The reason why they omit to press

what has proved to be so obvious a distinction may be this;—that the cleansing from guilt, or the pardon, is more closely identified with the breaking of the power of sin, in the actual history of a human soul, than it is in the process of reasoning about it. Consider the facts of the case, dear brethren. If our Father in heaven has loved us with an everlasting love, and has always been drawing us with loving-kindness; if He is really a jealous God, and stands in such a relation to us, and has created us in such a relation to Himself, that He cannot be satisfied without the love of our hearts, and we cannot be happy, cannot have found our right state, until we return in gratitude and filial obedience the love with which He has loved us, think what the results must be when His forgiveness actually reaches and touches us. Put aside resolutely the unworthy notion that God's forgiveness,—the pardon spoken of when it is said that Jesus Christ washed us from our sins in His own blood,—can mean simply the remitting of a legal penalty which we have incurred. Be sure that when we have gained from God's own messages of grace the confidence we could not otherwise have entertained, to speak of His Fatherly Love seeking us through such a sacrifice as that of His beloved Son; when we have been taught by Jesus Christ Himself that the very love with

which the Father loves Him, the perfect Son, embraces also every sinner and rebel made in His image,—we are raised into a region above *penalties*, we are moving in the yet more awful region and atmosphere of living personal relations. And this is what the *Blood* of Jesus so impressively testifies,—the blood which represents the *Life*, —the blood which circulated in the veins of the Son of God,—the blood which He shed in patient sacrifice, the sacrifice of a son and of a brother, upon the cross,—the blood which He gives for the life of the world. By His own blood the Son of God washed us from our sins. He brought the warm life-giving stream of the Father's forgiveness to flow over the cold and polluted barrenness of the human heart. He washed us that our distrust of God and our disobedience to Him and all the defilement and misery flowing from distrust and disobedience might disappear for ever, and that Father and children might thenceforth be the known and established title of the relation between men and the dreaded Power above them.

'Be reconciled to me,' is the voice of the Father, spoken in the out-flowing blood of the Son as He hangs upon the cross. *There* is God's forgiveness; there we read the meaning and the purpose of the pardon of our sins. God's forgiveness does not conquer us, does not reach us, until

we are restored to Him, and have entered into His favour; and then, where, let us ask, is the place for *sin?* The one root out of which sin can grow is killed by reconciliation to the righteous Father. There is no possibility of sinning, except by falling from His grace.

So that if we let the real message of the cross reach us, dear brethren, and if we enter into the thoughts of those who have spoken with the best knowledge of the cross and its meaning, we shall find less satisfaction in making any distinction between the *pardon* of our sin, and practical *deliverance* from it, between the efficacy of the blood of Christ to take away our guilt, and its efficacy to take away our inclination to evil. We shall see that we are speaking most profoundly, that we have got nearest to the heart of the matter, when we render our thanks and adoration with St John to Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him who declared to men the Name of the righteous Father, that the love wherewith God loved the Son might be in men, and He, the Son of God Himself, might be in men.

To Him, then, for His love and His sacrifice, we ascribe glory and dominion; "to Him be glory and dominion for ever." We recognize Him as a King, as the faithful witness of what was in

the Creator's mind, the first-born from the dead, the Prince of the kings of the earth. The glory and the royalty which we acknowledge have become manifest to us through the love and the sacrifice.

We ought never to forget this, in our contemplation of the Cross of Christ. The simple historical details given us in the Gospels, by which we cannot be too strictly guided, keep us in mind of the royalty of Him who died for our sins. He Himself claimed to be king,—to be the Royal Son of man,—the witness of the truth of God. It was for His pretensions to royalty that He was put to death. Over His head was written, This is the king of the Jews. He was mocked with the purple robe and the thorny crown. He was taunted with the sneer, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.

Of course the chief priests and the Pharisees, and Pilate and his Roman soldiers, imagined that they had summarily extinguished all such pretensions to kingship, when they had ascertained that their victim had given up the ghost on the cross. Nay even His own disciples, who had believed on Him, felt their hopes crushed into sorrowful despondency, and were utterly confounded as to what they should think of their late Master. No eye saw, or at least no eye saw clearly, the

glory which was shining round the head which hung bowed upon the cross. But the glory was there; and it was a glory of the kind which man cannot put out, which no priest or governor by any malignity or jealousy could darken. It was the glory of heaven itself, the glory with which the Father had been glorifying the Son, and the Son glorifying the Father from all eternity, the glory of *Love*. The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; the most awful voice of God is a still small voice; and the glory of God reveals itself gradually, but surely, to the eye that opens to take it in. Those who were taught by the Spirit of Christ beheld the glory of His cross with increasing clearness and with growing wonder and awe, till it seemed to them to fill the whole universe, and to be the one ruling and conquering power throughout all the worlds of God. They paid homage to the cross, and drew others in widening circles through the generations which followed them, to pay homage to the cross, until there was no symbol that was more honoured, no power which could boast of more manifest and demonstrated sway. Yes, brethren, if traditional reverence be all that is wanted, that which was a watch-word of contempt and shame 1800 years ago, is now the word of highest glory in the speech of men.

It is well then that we should go back to the day in which it had not borne this homage, and should ask ourselves whether, with all the help which Christendom gives us, we can see the kingliness of Christ's sacrifice. Look at His patience, His meekness, His magnanimity. Think of the protracted surrender of Himself, His will and His life, to God and to the cause of His brethren; and say, All this did Jesus, the King, give as a King. There is nothing more royal than to give, to give freely and ungrudgingly without thought of return; the most royal heart is the most liberal, the most generous. *He* has the best right to rule over the spirits of men, who has done most for them, who has given up most, and who has shewn the greatest power of sacrificing self for them. Jesus Christ appeals to us to become His subjects in the name of His kingly love, of His kingly sacrifice.

And if, when He thus was establishing His own royalty, He was also washing us with His own blood from our sins of selfishness, of covetousness, of exclusiveness, must He not also have been making *us kings* unto God? The life-blood of His heart was to make us *alive* unto God, alive with the spirit of His own nature. He washed us with His blood that the righteous Father's love might be in us, and that *He might be in us*. Assuredly if we have anything kingly in us, it comes

of the blood of Christ; it is due to that quickening flood of regeneration without which we should be studying each his own pleasure, his own interest, and caring not for the things of others. But now we are washed from that sin. The blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God has cleansed us from it. Its true efficacy is to make us royal unto God, to give us the spirit of generosity and sacrifice. Shame, then, on that Christian who clings to the name of the Cross as his tower of hope, and who will not be made a king unto God! Shame on him who has not risen to the thought of that self-surrender to which he is entitled in Christ, who has earthly notions of dignity and sacrifice instead of heavenly, whose chief aim is not to minister but to be ministered unto!

Glory to Him, the Apostle teaches us to say, who has made us *priests*, also, as well as kings, unto God and His Father. Our priesthood, our priestliness, must yet more be due to Christ and His atoning blood. He is the Great High Priest, qualified for that office by God's appointment and acceptance, by His perfect sympathy with those for whom He is ordained, by the possession of an acceptable sacrifice, the sacrifice of Himself, which He presents through the Eternal Spirit to the Father. In Him, being washed into sonship and acceptance by His blood of relationship and life,

we also are made a priesthood unto God. He is our Priest, that we may all be priests; that we too may offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ. We are to plead and present the one great and worthy oblation which has been offered; in token of our fellowship with it, believing them to be henceforth consecrated and made acceptable, we are to offer hopefully even the feeblest and unworthiest sacrifices. The thought and prayer and aspiration of the weak and divided heart; the confessions of the heavy-laden conscience; the praise of lips not always kept pure from folly and pollution; the works of hands not always clean; the labour and ambition of a life not in all things sincere and innocent;—these sacrifices we are made priests to offer to God and our Father. Glory and dominion be to Him who has redeemed such offerings from their natural unworthiness, who has purified them from being an ill-savour, through their sinful taint, in the nostrils of God! Glory and dominion, increasingly, and more deeply in our own hearts and lives, be to Him who makes it *natural* to us, according to the higher nature given us in Him, and which He Himself *is* in us, to offer anything to God at all! May He make us more conscious of the heavenly dignity put upon us, and therefore more humble with His own humility; may He make us more

solicitous not to dishonour the holy calling which He has given us, not to tread under foot the Son of God, not to count the covenant-blood with which we have been sanctified an unholy thing, not to do despite to the Spirit of grace, not to crucify the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame! May He assert and extend His own dominion, through us and through others His servants, throughout the world, winning hearts to His allegiance, subduing them to the principle of the Cross, comforting them in endurance and patience by trust in the righteous Father, making them willing to bear all or to dare all in obedience to His voice and guidance, making them fearful to walk in any path of apparent attractiveness and security in which He is not leading them.

May He bless this Good Friday to us, and cause it to leave us more earnest to rule ourselves and obey God, more resolved to be followers of the crucified Christ in spirit and in deed!

SERMON VI.

THE PASSOVER.

1 Corinthians V. 7.

"Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."

THIS is the only passage in Scripture, I believe, which directly connects together the sacrifice of the Passover and the sacrifice of the Death of Christ. And here they are only connected by an incidental allusion. The Apostle is speaking of the purity which ought to belong to the Christian body. This purity is represented under the image of freedom from leaven. With that thought in his mind, St Paul exhorts the Corinthians to keep a perpetual Feast of unleavened bread. Such a Feast has been opened, as was due, by a sacrifice. The Lamb of the new Passover festival, he says has been slain. This Lamb was Christ.

Even this solitary reference, coming to us as it does with the great authority of St Paul, would

have justified Christians in dwelling on the analogies between the Paschal sacrifice and the death of Christ. But we have another stronger reason for doing so. The Gospels relate to us that our Lord's betrayal and crucifixion took place immediately after a supper in which He and His Apostles had joined to celebrate the Passover. At this supper the Lord Jesus distributed the bread and the wine which were solemnly given to the guests, as they are amongst the Jews to this day, at a Paschal Supper. In giving the bread, He said, This is my body, given for you. In giving the wine, he said, This is my blood, shed for you. The remembrance of our Lord's last Supper bids us inquire what the meaning of the Jewish passover was, and why the consecrated elements of that Festival were taken up by Jesus Christ and received a higher consecration as emblems of His body and blood. Our Easter services bring the question fully before us. The words of my text, and those which follow, are used on Easter Day as a song of praise. In the Communion Service, the special preface for Easter-tide speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ as the very Paschal Lamb, which was offered for us, and hath taken away the sin of the world. And our first Lessons at this season are chapters from that part of the book of Exodus in which we read of the events which the

Passover commemorates, and of the institution of the Festival itself.

Let us go back to that history, and after seeing what we can gather as to its significance, let us consider in what respects the Passover was fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Christ.

It was a difficult matter to compel Pharaoh and the Egyptians to give up such a source of profit and pride as they possessed in the enslaved children of Israel. After other plagues, sent for that purpose, had spent their force in vain, one terrible plague remained, which was to cause Pharaoh and his people to thrust them in haste out of the land. The firstborn in every Egyptian family was to be slain. In one night the Destroying Angel was to pass through the land of Egypt, and to smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast. This announcement was made to Moses, and by Moses repeated to Pharaoh. The awful stroke fell upon the land, and the rescue of the children of Israel was effectually accomplished. There was no more refusal to let the people go. The Egyptians were urgent with them and hastened their departure; and they went forth laden with the precious things of their oppressors, now ready even to pay them for going away.

This historical fact, of the escape of the children of Israel from their house of bondage, is the

main point upon which we have to fix our attention. From that event their national history dated. They began their true existence as a nation with a deliverance from slavery, effected by the mighty hand of Jehovah their God.

The memory of that deliverance was to be the strongest and the deepest of the national traditions. The institutions of the country recorded it. Inspired poets sang of it; inspired preachers appealed to it. The people were taught to live and act, to cultivate the soil and to fight their enemies, like a nation delivered out of a galling and degrading bondage by the mighty hand of Jehovah Himself stretched out in their behalf. "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage," —this was the introduction to the most solemn and the most universal of the commandments which were given to the people through Moses. That lawgiver enjoined upon the people the observance of all the statutes of the Lord their God, in the name of the mighty works done in the great deliverance. He bade them keep the Sabbath day, and allow the rest of that day to man-servant and maid-servant, remembering that they had been servants in the land of Egypt, and had been brought out thence by the Lord their God, through a mighty hand and by a stretched-out arm. They

were a redeemed people,—the deliverance out of Egypt was the token of it; and they were to obey and to trust in Him who had laid the foundation of redemption beneath them.

Now the special institution which had for its one appointed office to keep alive the memory of the redemption from Egyptian bondage was the annual Feast of the Passover. Before entering into its details, it is well to have this clearly in view. To keep the Passover was to commemorate with the appointed symbols and in the appointed spirit the emancipation of the people out of slavery. No other significance which any part of the Festival might have, could override or interfere with this. It is a singular feature in the Exodus narrative, that the appointment of the Festival is given in full before the event of which it is to be a witness has taken place. "The Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you." Then follows, in the twelfth chapter, which was our first lesson, the Law ordaining the Festival. Every household was to take a lamb on the tenth day of that month, to keep it until the fourteenth day, and then kill it publicly before the Lord. The posts of the house were to be sprinkled with the blood. The same night the

flesh was to be eaten, roasted, together with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. The unleavened bread was to play an important part in the commemoration. For seven days only unleavened bread was to be eaten; everything leavened was to be put out of the way. The lamb of the passover was to be eaten by the household with loins girded, with shoes on their feet and staff in their hand: it was to be eaten in haste. The points in this ordinance which come into direct contact with the history are the following: the blood on the doorposts was a sign that the house belonged to the children of Israel, and was to be spared on that dreadful night when the Destroying Angel went through the land of Egypt. Concerning the leaven, we read that the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. And when they had journeyed some way, "they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victuals." Afterwards, in Deut. xvi., we read the words, "seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread, even the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste; that thou mayest

remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life." We may gather from this passage, perhaps, that both the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs were intended to remind the people of the elements of sorrow and wrath which were mixed up in their deliverance.

We find however no direct interpretation of the slaying and eating of the lamb. There is here no exception to the general and remarkable silence of the Old Testament, with reference to the meaning of the sacrifice of animals, which I noticed last Sunday. Sacrifice is taken for granted, as an institute of humanity. All nations had learnt to worship their Gods in this way. It was left to the act of sacrifice itself to awaken in the mind of the worshippers the feelings properly corresponding to it. To slay the victim was to present an offering in the hope of its being accepted,—in the case of an Israelite, with the assurance of its being accepted. Probably, the presenting of a life was felt to be the opening of a door into the unseen world. Unquestionably, the true worshipper would have some feeling that he was offering *himself*, that all life belonged to the Giver of it, and that animal life, in man or beast, was to be subjected and used for the Divine glory.

The sacrifice of the Passover Lamb would share in the general significance of sacrifice, and would have besides some special characteristics. Connected as it was with the event to which the people referred their national existence, it would teach them that sacrifice, that is, surrender to God, was the law and principle of that existence; that as they owed their being to God, so they should render it up to Him. The sprinkling of every house with the blood of the sacrifice would mark very strongly the distinction between the children of Israel and their oppressors, and would testify that as the Lord had shewed mercy to His people, so He had visited their enemies with terrible chastisement. And, as to the eating of the lamb in the houshold, is it too much to deduce from it, that it might beget at least in some minds the mysterious consciousness, that the whole nation and every family of it must be fed with Divine food, must be kept alive by a spirit of sacrifice belonging to God Himself?

There is another sacrifice not to be separated from the Passover. In the 13th of Exodus, ver. 1, we read, "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine." Afterwards, ver. 14, "It shall be, when thy son asketh

thee in time to come, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: and it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the Lord slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both the first-born of man, and the first-born of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all that openeth the matrix, being males: but all the first-born of my children I redeem. And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt." The wicked nation was smitten in the slaying of its first-born: the saved nation was to offer itself to the Lord in the dedication of its first-born. The sacrifice of the Passover, and this giving up of the first-born through sacrifice, were a confession on the part of the whole people, that they held their national life as a gift from God, which He might claim, and that they must render it up to Him in service and trust and obedience.

This is a hasty account of the ordinance which we are taught to connect with the Death and Resurrection of our Saviour. How does the deliverance of the Jewish people, we are now to ask, and the ordinance which commemorated it,

resemble the event for which at Easter we Christians give thanks?

Might not some *contrast* be suggested, before a resemblance is discovered? Might it not be said, 'The emancipation of a whole race was a very substantial advantage, an event which the people so rescued might look back upon with perpetual gratitude, and in which all men who care for their fellow-men might rejoice. But the dying and rising again of Christ are not supposed to confer that sort of boon. They may be sources of spiritual advantages to believers, of blessings to be inherited by souls, mostly in the next world, by foretaste in this. How can there be any analogy, except a fanciful one, between the leading forth of a nation out of a land of slavery, and the making possible of certain spiritual privileges for scattered believers, here and there throughout the world?'

In the first place, let us remember that the emancipation of the Israelites was, in its highest character, a *spiritual* emancipation. It was not designed for the mere contentment of their flesh and blood. It was by no means a voluptuous life to which they were first introduced. In the course of their trying wanderings in the Desert, they were often tempted to murmur against the God who was leading them, and to sigh regret-

fully for the flesh-pots of Egypt. No, brethren; the evil of slavery does not lie in the physical hardships that men may have to undergo, nor does the good of freedom consist in the greater power of doing what one likes, or in the greater facilities for acquiring property which freemen may enjoy. National freedom would not be worthy of the aspirations and toils and sufferings of the noblest men if it did not imply spiritual deliverance and growth, if it were not a necessary condition of the highest moral development. Let us remember this for ourselves, as Englishmen ought to remember it. Let us remember it as we watch with hopeful anxiety the struggles of other nations, as of Italy at this moment, in the pursuit of independence and freedom. It is not a question of flesh-pots, of corn and oil and wine: it is a question of virtue and honour and life; of faith and hope and charity; of the growing knowledge of a God who redeems and trains up His children. The breaking of national fetters is God's own way of breaking the fetters of the soul. A servile condition trains a servile spirit. Only the citizen of a free nation can be a man, as God would have men to be upon this earth.

I ask now therefore, may not the Death and Resurrection of Christ have been such a spiritual

emancipation for mankind, as may have been needful before any personal or national freedom could have been complete? Think of two chains which have always fettered the spirit of humanity, and say whether Christ accomplished nothing for man's redemption in breaking these: the sense of guilt on the conscience; and the fear of death. I do not mean to say that men have actually been delivered from these. We are too ignorant of our own franchise, as the poor Israelites despised their freedom, and perished through their unbelief in the wilderness. But the chains are broken, for those who will enjoy their freedom; and countless multitudes have tested to the full their emancipation, and all Christendom feels some common benefit from the deliverance. Fear of death: is not the Scripture true to the deepest experience of mankind when it speaks of men having been through fear of death all their life-time subject to bondage? With what terrors has not the grave been haunted! Whether its portal has been a mere blank or painted with hideous images; whether the chamber to which it opens has been a mere pit, an abyss, a Hades, or a region peopled with the horrors which a fearful imagination could create, how terrible it has been to men! How all alike, the happy and the unhappy, the busy and the

weary, have shrunk from the contemplation of death! The Resurrection of Christ shews to us the Son of God walking with glorified human form through the dark unknown. We are taught that our relation to Him is a reality which surmounts outward conditions and varying circumstances. He is the Head of all creation, the Elder Brother of mankind, the Son of the One Eternal Father. Is it nothing to us, when we meditate on the deaths of our friends and look forward to our own, that He has tasted death in behalf of every man; that He took part of the flesh and blood which His brothers wore that He might die their death, and that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage? And is it not necessary to a man's complete freedom, that he should not be afraid of death?

Consider again the sense of guilt, and the frightful bondage in which that keeps men. Philosophers have described the horrors of which Religion, in its various forms, has been the mother. They have pointed to the human sacrifices, the frightful self-tortures, the crushing of the simplest and most beautiful affections, the lurid gloom thrown over life, which have been due to the fear of supernatural beings supposed to be offended by

man. They have sought to deliver men from the horrid bondage of this fear by teaching them not to believe in any supernatural Being. Their method of deliverance can scarcely be said to have had a fair trial, because they have never been able to persuade any number of men to become absolute atheists. The other method of deliverance has been tried, and has been found to succeed. The sense of guilt, which weighs down the individual and makes him wicked—such a mother of sin is the sense of sin—and which darkens the atmosphere of society, has been purged away. Men not without knowledge of sin, often great sinners, have looked on Christ dying and rising again for them, and have felt themselves forgiven by the Father of their Lord and Saviour, and have come to Him in openness and joy of spirit, and have kept the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. The contemplation of Christ,—sent from the Eternal Father, loving, enduring, dying; loved by the Father *because* He was willing to lay down His life, raised again in glory by the forgiving Father of mankind,—has been found to be the way to a genuine and permanent freedom. The unrestrained confession of sin to Christ and the Father has been like the lifting away of a heavy burden to countless hearts; the knowledge that the God who must hate sin so

much, has nothing dearer to Him than the cleansing of one of His children who has been defiled with it, has been a sure basis for repentance and for persevering conflict with sin. Oh, brethren, is there no real substantial redemption in knowing that we may have fellowship with the Father and with the Son; that if we have sinned, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness; that we may walk with Christ in that heavenly light of truth and integrity and simplicity which streams forth from Him; that we may lay aside all artifices for the concealment of our evil, all ingenious attempts to extenuate it, and come to God, saying, Thou, O Father, knowest the worst of me; do not suffer Thy child to abide in the evil, but wash me thoroughly from my sin, and cleanse me from all my iniquity?

Will you compare for a moment the condition of a man who sees nothing at all, or nothing helpful and hopeful, in the invisible world, to whom the departure of any whom he cares for can only cause an aching and a trembling void, who walks through life haunted by a law which he cannot deny but is perpetually breaking, and who is either deadened into sensuality, or irritated into rebellion and perverseness by this collision, with the condition of one who knows that he has the

Eternal God, the Lord, for the Father of his own spirit and of other men's spirits in Jesus Christ, who clings to the Son of man who loved, endured, and died, as a never-failing friend, who submits to a spirit of warmth and trust and truth, as the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, by whose inspiration he is to be on terms of love and fellowship with his brother-men. I do not ask now, Which is the happier? but, Which is the *freer* man? Which has the fewer hindrances to his true growth and development? Which has the less of a sense of bondage and oppression? Which will be the more able to act with vigour and fearlessness according as he sees to be right?

See therefore, dear brethren, in the redemption of a nation out of slavery, in the manly freedom of a nation, whether the nation be Israel, England, or Italy, an inferior but analogous work of Him who makes mankind free in Jesus Christ who has died and risen again, and who lives for evermore. See mankind brought out of darkness into sunshine, out of jealousies and rivalries into peace, out of oppression into the buoyancy of hope. Let our song of thanksgiving be the song of Moses and of the Lamb. Beholding God's terrible judgments on selfishness and wrong, His wonderful mercy and long-suffering in redemption, as Moses saw them when he had led the people through the

Red Sea, and as Jesus saw them when He rose out of the grave, let us be prepared in heart to sing with Moses the servant of God and with the Lamb, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest. Yes, let us keep the perpetual Feast brought in by the One Eternal Sacrifice, with the joy and sincerity of children of God, forgiven and blessed. Let us rejoice,—not forgetting the basis upon which all enduring joy must rest; not forgeting that those whom God has redeemed with the precious blood of Christ must make a continual sacrifice of themselves to God. If a Jewish houshold had to offer the family sacrifice of the Passover Lamb, our families must be consecrated to the service of Him who has formed and organized them. If the Jewish nation had to confess, by the special dedication of the first-born, that it stood, in all its hopes and strength, upon the bounty and mercy of God, let us not be slow to confess that the glory and worth of our nation are gifts from God, and that we must render to Him the homage of a devout and fearless obedience. There is yet another sacrifice,

which the Israelite was not taught to offer, the sacrifice we are to render not only in our household and in our country, but as members of the united and consecrated family of man. Christ Himself made the perfect offering for the whole world. That offering we must present and plead before the Father. We must give ourselves to God as men; we must pray and labour for all mankind; we must look forward to the time when Christ shall be able to present the universal trust and obedience of men to His Father as the completion of His own sacrifice.

Brethren, if we are to gain such a victory over self-seeking and self-glorifying, as must be gained before we can offer these sacrifices, must we not be nourished with a Spirit from God Himself? Can we give ourselves up to God by our own will and pleasure? Shall we not give thanks to God that He who ordains the sacrifice has also provided the means for it, and that He is ready to feed us with the Body and Blood which were given for the life of the world? Let us feed on the Lamb that has been slain; let us eat the Passover of sacrifice and redemption. Let us submit our souls, in the consciousness of our weakness and defilement, to the blessed power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Let us come to the partaking of our sacramental bread and wine in the faith

that God Himself will minister strength and refreshment to us; that He who has passed a sentence of death upon the grovelling, downward-tending, carnal life, will Himself pour into our veins abundantly that heavenly, upward-seeking life which is hid with Christ in God.

SERMON VII.

THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

1 St Peter II. 21.

"Leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps."

IT is one most important aspect of the Life and Death of our Saviour, that we have in His acts an *example* for every Christian to imitate. We may complain that those who have represented the Gospel as consisting *only* in the exhibition of this example, have omitted other views of the saving work of Christ, not less important, and more powerful in their effect upon the souls of men. But no Christian will deny the perfectness of our Lord's life, or the obligation which binds all His servants to follow their Master.

This duty is very plainly laid down in the New Testament. Our Lord Himself set his own example before His disciples, and called upon them

to follow it. "If any one come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and *follow me*." "Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you *an example*, that ye should do as I have done to you." The Apostles are not backward in teaching the same lesson. St Peter speaks in our text. St John says, "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked." St Paul says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

Let us look at this duty more closely, brethren, and consider how we are to fulfil it.

1. It is plain that our Lord's life, as recorded in the Gospels, does not present situations corresponding to all those in which human beings may be placed. Perhaps too much is sometimes attempted to be made out, with regard to the extent to which the life of Christ tallies in its outward features with the lives of men. It is true that Jesus was an infant, a youth, and a grown man; and it is profitable to consider Him as therefore sharing our infancy, our boyhood, and our adult age. But then it must be admitted that He was not an old man. He was a son, a friend, and presumably an artisan. But He was not a husband

or a father; not a landowner or a tradesman. We make perhaps a graver admission still, when we say that He was not a woman. These admissions we might carry on without limit, as we reckon up the various relations and circumstances in which we may be placed. They prove conclusively, that a close repetition of the acts of our Lord cannot be what is meant, when it is said that His example is one for all men to follow. If a father seeks to know, for instance, how he ought to act in the management of his children, he will not find it reported how the Son of God acted in similar circumstances. Even when we find a correspondence of circumstances, and can learn how Jesus acted when placed as one of us may be placed, we ought not to consider the following of His example to be simply the repeating of His actions.

2. It is clearly the *spirit* in which our Saviour acted which we are to follow. This is one chief reflection which I would commend to you this morning. The details of our Lord's conduct may be very helpful in shewing us how to act in particular situations. But their highest and most general value consists in their illustrating or interpreting the *mind* of Christ. As we learn to understand our fellow-men not through metaphysical or ethical descriptions of them, but through the observation of their acts, so it is with our knowledge

of the Saviour. It was of infinite importance that we should know the Son of God to be a living person, and should perceive the Spirit that was in Him to be a fountain of conduct, sending forth the streams of word and deed. Every thing He did, every word He spoke, has this value,—that it contributes to our knowledge of Him who spoke and acted. The single recorded incident of His boyhood, His conversation with the doctors in the Temple, and what we are told of His submission to his mother and Joseph, and his growing in favour with man as well as with God, cannot be thought of with much profit, except in direct connexion with His nature and character. All the acts of His ministry become most instructive, when we see in them so many tokens of the simplicity, the sympathy, the kindness, the fearlessness, of our Lord's character. The *actions* are most precious and indispensable to bring us into acquaintance with the *spirit* out of which they proceeded; and when they have done that, their chief work is done. Thenceforward, what we have to do with is the spirit.

And this is altogether the view of our Lord's example which is set before us in the Scriptures. The *mind* of Christ is that which we are to follow. The motive principle which caused the Incarnation and shewed itself throughout the tenor of our

Lord's life in the flesh, is that which we are to lay hold of and cherish as *our* motive principle. We are to give up ourselves, as Christ gave up Himself. Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should walk in His steps. The devotion, and patience, and meekness of Christ, betoken a spirit which we are all to ask for, and to receive as our spirit.

3. But when we have seen this clearly,—that our imitation of Jesus Christ is not to be mainly a copying of His actions as child or man, but a seeking of the spirit which breathed in Him through His whole course,—serious questions present themselves, which may sometimes assume the character of perplexing difficulties to our minds. They arise out of the fact, that the Spirit of which we are speaking is shewn to us chiefly through one class of attributes, and seems to be especially suited to one class of circumstances. The image of the Son of God is that of the man of sorrows. The description given by Isaiah liii. of the servant of Jehovah is felt to be characteristic of Jesus Christ. His praise is that, when oppressed and afflicted, He opened not His mouth; that He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and that as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. In these respects, St Peter, St Paul, and St John, call upon His disciples to follow Him.

The most characteristic exhortation which He Himself addresses to His hearers is, that they resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite them on the right cheek, that they turn to Him the other also.

In arguments on behalf of Christianity, it is commonly urged as a proof of the Divine origin of the Gospel morality, that whereas the world was accustomed to admire the bolder qualities called heroic, and to despise meekness and humility, our Saviour and His Apostles enjoined the practice of those virtues which, though they have less to captivate the imagination, are really more beneficial to the world, and more beautiful to the discerning eye. 'Granted,' says an inquirer: 'but does not this shew that Christianity is one-sided? Are we to understand the teaching of Christ as condemning those heroic qualities? Does it require us to withhold our admiration from the brave and high-minded leader of men who smites down the enemies of God, from the stern ruler who bears the sword, and bears it not in vain, for the suppression of wrong-doing and of vice? The weakness and helplessness of Him who was despised and rejected of men, and of His first followers, whom the world hated because it hated their Master, may have made the virtues of meekness and submission the most necessary for *them*. They may deserve all

our admiration for the gentle and forgiving temper which they were enabled to exhibit. In their circumstances, the maxim not to resist evil may have been a desirable one, and not mischievous to society. But will these same maxims, will this same morality, apply to the prosperous, the strong, the popular? Is it reasonable or is it safe for them to imitate the conduct of Christ and His followers? Can we tell them to turn the left cheek to Him who smites them on the right, to seek for the Spirit that was in Christ as their deepest and sufficient inspiration?'

Such questions, dear brethren, are often asked now. They are put forward both by those who discuss the principles of morality and by those who criticise the quality and completeness of the New Testament. So far as they are disparaging to the teaching of Christ and His apostles, we may see some excuse for them in the narrow defences which have been put forth in behalf of that teaching. When the principles of Gospel morality are *contrasted* with what is really noble and useful in the morality of heathen nations, it is fair to ask in reply whether it is not a defect in the Gospel, that it either condemns or fails to commend what the world rightly admires and really wants. But we can imagine the same questions asked inwardly by humble Christians, all whose sympathies and pre-

judices are with and not against the Gospel, and who desire to find in the spirit of Christ and of His nearest followers a perfect guide for themselves. There is, no doubt, a marked difference between the little flock surrounded by wolves and roaring lions, and modern Christians who share the front place in the power and civilisation of the world. It is most reasonable to ask whether we can, without pretence or reserve, commit ourselves to the simple and hearty following of the spirit of Christ.

4. I believe, brethren, we shall find that we may do so, and with nothing but advantage, in all possible circumstances. Trial is the best proof; and we may confidently maintain that there have been servants of Christ, in high stations of power and authority, living in almost unclouded prosperity, who have looked to their Master's example as their supreme guide, and have felt that His spirit was the best motive power for their acts in all varieties of situations. To try is our simplest duty. But it may please God to give us greater confidence and hope in trying, if we consider whether there is any reasonable obstacle to our success in following Christ, except that which our own unwillingness presents.

We must fix our thoughts upon the principle which we have already recognised. We saw that our Lord's example is in the *Spirit* which His

acts betokened. The spirit, we say, was a spirit of submission and sacrifice, of self-denial. It was a spirit of meekness and patience under affronts, of silent endurance, a spirit which said of His murderers, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. Yes, but this spirit itself had a deeper root. The spirit of Jesus was one of perfect submission to *the Righteous Father*, of perfect delight in His will. No way so wonderful or so divine could have been found of displaying the nature both of the Father and of the Son, as that of sacrifice and submission to injuries. But the spirit which thus gave itself up and submitted, was a will of entire acquiescence in the will of the Eternal Lord. The submission to evil was only for the sake of the truest conquest over evil; and it did not exclude other ways,—inferior and subordinate ways, like those of coercion and punishment,—of subduing evil. When St Peter says that our Lord "threatened not," it is not that He *never* threatened. It was only when He suffered Himself, that He refrained from threatening. Neither Jesus nor His followers shrank from threatening. The "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," the "Go to, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you," resounds from time to time amongst the gentler voices of the Gospel. St Paul, who certainly

sought nothing more earnestly or more clearly than to be made entirely like Christ, could speak of the task of the revenger, to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil, as a ministry of God; and when brought before judges could discourse of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, so that a Felix trembled.

Let us understand this then, that the spirit which forbids the revenging of personal injuries and cherishes all meekness and gentleness, is a genuine part or aspect of that spirit which is a delight in righteousness and truth, a giving up of self to the will of God. The true mind of the Eternal Son of God, the true mind of any mortal son of God, when tried by personal sufferings and injuries, would certainly shew itself in patience and forgiveness. It is under such trials that its essential quality would best shew itself. But when not so tried, it would be free to act in other ways; and that same essential quality would prompt the truest and most righteous conduct in all circumstances.

The difference between the condition of the first Christians and the circumstances most unlike that condition may be represented by a twofold change,—from worldly inferiority to superiority, and from affliction to happiness. Let us touch on each of these changes. (1) Almost all the

exhortations to specially Christian conduct, in the New Testament, are addressed to those whose position in the world is one of inferiority. The first Christians were for the most part weak, despised, and oppressed. They are bidden to cherish a meek, uncomplaining, loving temper under provocations. Now, the greatest nations and the most powerful persons in the world profess the faith of Christ. No one, down to the lowest class amongst ourselves, is in any inferiority as a Christian, or feels that as a Christian he is under any greater necessity (though he is under stronger *obligations*) to cultivate love and forgiveness than if he were not a follower of Christ. But, in order that a man may be a true man, a good and useful member of the human family, in any place of power or influence, what character does he want? Is it desirable that he should let loose his passions or his impulses, that he should seek his own interest, and follow the devices and desires of his own heart, that he should be forward to resent an injury done to himself, and rejoice in satisfying his revenge? Surely not. He will be the best man, who cares most for the honour and glory of the righteous God, and who delights most simply in the will of the Universal Father;—that is, who is most filled with the spirit of Christ. We will suppose

that he never has any proud man's contumely to provoke him, that he seems able throughout life to maintain his power and influence unshaken; still, he will need, if he is to be a good and worthy man, the very conquest of self, the very loyalty to God, the very love of his fellow-men, the very belief in eternal things, the very trust in heavenly justice, which, if his position were changed, would shew themselves instantly in meekness and patience under injuries. He will need these, that he may not look down arrogantly on his inferiors, that he may reverence human nature and his fellow-men's rights, that he may not turn the power he has into the channels of his own profit or aggrandisement, that he may not punish, when he must punish, as if he himself were wronged. (2) Take again the case of those whose lives cannot be considered as a great fight of affliction. Suppose the serenest and the sunniest of the lives which may be led where general prosperity, equal laws, the courtesies of civilization, and the honoured charities of domestic life, provide an atmosphere in which a well-endowed nature may bud and blossom without check. Can we reasonably set before a youth or a girl so situated the example of the Man of Sorrows, and of the martyrs and confessors of His Faith? Yes, brethren, we may. For do

but consider the temptations of such a lot. I will not say that there are trials and crosses from which the most favoured human destiny is not exempt. A word about those presently. But imagine them absent. Is there not a terrible danger that the young man or the young woman we suppose may grow up with a feeble, unexercised, moral nature, passively depending on the good things and securities of this life, utterly destitute of the nobler impulses and the vigorous constancies which are the glory of man's being? Is it not well for all, however smooth and happy their lot in life may be, to live not as mere children of earth, to whom this higher world and the future world are repelling blanks, but as children of the Father in heaven whose purpose in all the dispensations of the visible life, is to bring them to a knowledge of Himself? And must it not be difficult, without some rude handling from the external conditions which surround us, to be in the world and yet not of it, to lead the heavenly life upon this earth? Then does it not become the more needful to bring the divine example of Jesus Christ to bear upon the minds of the prosperous and the happy, that they may not sink into a feeble, contented, inoffensive, selfishness? Must we not say to such, 'You, whose lives are so easy, for whom every thing is provided richly to

enjoy, are the sworn servants and followers of One who was despised and rejected of men, who knew not where to lay his head. If you think His example will not suit you, you have no other ideal set before you. According to the universal belief of the Christian world, you have that ideal *or none*. The principle of Christ was that He did not seek His own. He came to do not His own will, but His Father's. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for the many. He came to bear witness for the truth, and to suffer at the hands of those who would not receive the truth. He came in love, and He walked in love; insulted and injured, but never allowing His own pride or His own injuries to cloud for a moment the revealing of His Father's righteousness and His Father's love. He might have chosen a life of affluence and ease: He did choose one of hardships and affliction. He might have put down with a thought the insolence of His own creatures: He chose to be patient under it. He sought not to leave men alone, still less to trample men down, but by coming into contact with their evil, to win them and to purify them. Contemplate the example of your Master; drink in His spirit. He may call you to give up your comforts and your happiness: He may not. You cannot

tell by any theory whether He does or not. If you were to form a hasty judgment in the matter, you would be putting your will in the place of His. But you ought to be so trained inwardly, in devout submission to the will of God, in joyful thankfulness for all things to God, in hearty admiration of the Saviour's life, that you should carry with you through the luxuries of the quietest life the same inward temper which would make you patient and cheerful in privations and sufferings, which would guard you from being tender towards yourselves if everything seemed to be denied to you.'

Can you conceive, brethren, of any other spirit which would be more precious for those whose lot it is to enjoy the blessings and comforts of life? Such a spirit would not only guard against the miserable pettiness and enfeeblement of the moral character which ease and riches tend to produce, but it would be the best security for the loftiest and finest temper, for the best use and employment of all worldly advantages. No one is the better or the nobler for being enslaved to worldly advantages. Every one would use such advantages most wisely, who should be able to give them up, and to follow the example of Christ under privation and contempt.

I have alluded to those vexations and trials from which no human life, however fortunate, is exempt. I do not wish to magnify these. It seems wiser rather to make little of them, as far as we ourselves are concerned; and not to try whether, by exaggerating our little griefs, we may not bring ourselves up to the level of sufferers and martyrs. But great or little, we all have some crosses. Let us use these to convince ourselves whether the example of Christ is not really the best ideal for each one of us to pursue. Let us see how we bear these. Slights will be met with, even when they are not foolishly imagined. And the most superior person may be vexed by the want of appreciation of the most inferior. Disappointments will come in our way; some trifling, some very painful, though the world may not know of them. How do we bear these? Can we conquer jealousy, envy, mortification, resentment? Do we not know that in these things our souls are tried to their core? Do we not find that if in these matters we have acquired true Christian magnanimity, we are not likely to be false and effeminate, cowardly and selfish, in other respects? And if our trials are not very severe, are we not the more bound, in common reason, to be more victorious over every temptation? Is there any

excuse for one who is only beset by small temptations, if in these he falls?

I cannot doubt, dear brethren, that the hearts of us all from within will bear their witness to the example of our suffering Saviour. We know that it would be the best thing for us, that His image should be perfectly formed in us, that in prosperity we should exercise the temper which would shine in adversity, that when we have to rule we should be as submissive and unselfish as those who are called upon to obey. Our vocation is to follow Christ along any path by which He leads us. It is for Him to choose the path. He is now leading us, though He no longer is suffering in the flesh the pains and vexations which He came amongst us to endure. His image now is that of a conqueror riding on a white horse; but He is the same person, cherishing the same humanity, the same meekness, the same love, as when He prayed for His murderers. The type of His nature is the Lamb of Sacrifice. And those who follow Him may be privileged to ride upon white horses and share his victorious triumphs; but they must wear robes which they have washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. The spirit of sacrifice must be theirs too. They must have learnt to subordinate ease and comfort to the

glory of God and the testimony of the truth. They must have learnt to think not of the praise which comes from men, but of the honour which God puts upon character and actions. They must have made themselves partakers of the self-renunciation of Christ, or it will be impossible to share the glory of which he, through self-surrender, has become the inheritor.

Therefore brethren, let us rejoice to acknowledge one common end, one ideal, one rule of life. We cannot do without some ideal to aim at. We ought not to be content to be pushed through life by necessities and habits. Let us be thankful that we are not left to compound an ideal for ourselves out of the elements of our experience or our philosophy.

There is a perfect Man, whose character is given us to consider and to imitate. That character is the character of the perfect Son of God, whose one principle was to do the will of His Father in Heaven. If we will accept this for our ideal, God Himself promises to mould us into its likeness. Those who follow Christ, He will make more than conquerors in all their trials; and when they have thus overcome through His Spirit, He will raise them to a fellowship in glory with Himself and with His Father for ever.

SERMON VIII.

THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST.

St Mark I. 4, 9.

"John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins . . . And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan."

IT was immediately after His Baptism that our Lord was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil. If we wish to understand the Temptation, we must not lose sight of the Baptism. I propose to consider this morning the meaning of our Lord's Baptism, as an introduction to the study of His Temptation.

The first of the two verses I have read characterizes St John's baptism very explicitly. It is a baptism of *repentance for the remission of sins*. The second verse speaks of Jesus, who had no sin to repent of or to be remitted,

as being baptized with that baptism. There is an apparent contradiction here, which bids us look closely into the matter. We are compelled to ask the question, Did the Baptism of John retain its proper character when Jesus came to it, or did it lose or change in this case the significance it had when other men received it? Let us see what light the Scriptures throw on that Baptism.

1. We should carefully observe, first, whether the account given us of the general purport of 'the baptism of John' is uniform and decisive in the Gospels. We have seen what St Mark says. Let us turn to St Matthew iii. We read there that John the Baptist came preaching and saying, Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand; that multitudes went out to him, and were baptized of him in Jordan confessing their sins; and that he himself interpreted the outward sign thus,—I baptize you with water unto repentance. This exactly agrees with St Mark in making St John's Baptism neither more nor less than a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. St Luke's words, iii. 3, are exactly identical with these; and he further shews us by examples, how closely a genuine and particular amendment of life was connected by St John with his baptism, in

those who came to be baptized by him. All were required to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. Every man was to share his goods with the needy. The publican was to exact no more than the appointed tribute. The soldier was to abstain from outrages and wrong-doing.

It is plain therefore that we should be giving up the whole recorded sense of John's Baptism, if we were to put aside in any way the interpretation which makes the washing with water a remitting of sin. John had a message to deliver,—The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. He had an exhortation to press upon the people,—That they should prepare for that Kingdom by repenting of their sins. He had an assurance to convey, in God's name,—That those who would might be clean and forgiven in His sight. The baptizing was the symbol of God's forgiveness. To submit to it was to say, I am a sinner, may God forgive me and cleanse me.

This was the first utterance of the good news that came with Christ to sinful men. St Mark calls it the beginning of the Gospel. For we may slightly alter the form of the fourth verse, and connect it with the first, the second and third forming a parenthesis, thus :—The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was....John, baptizing in the wilderness, and

preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. The prospect of deliverance from sin, a hope in God as a friendly and forgiving Lord, came into the hearts of men as a real blessing. To look upon the austere prophet of the wilderness, and to hear him announce with authority that God was about to manifest Himself, and was ready then and there to forgive any man who was willing to have his sin put away, was a beginning of new life. It was appointed, in the gradual course of the Divine government, that the ministry of the Son of God Himself should be preceded by a ministry which awakened them to thoughts of God as a gracious Ruler, and to an expectation of a Kingdom of righteousness and purity.

But these observations do not enable us to understand how Jesus the sinless could receive without a practical contradiction such a baptism as that which we are considering.

2. Let us go on to notice the particulars of our Lord's baptism. His coming to John surprised John himself, who exclaimed, "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me? But Jesus answered, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo,

the heavens were opened unto Him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Now, it cannot be accidentally, we should suppose, that these circumstances occurred at the baptism of Jesus. There must be some connection between His baptism, and the voice from heaven and the Spirit descending visibly upon Him. The assurance conveyed by this ceremony to Jesus Himself must have been that expressed in the words, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Upon this assurance, brethren, I would ask you to fix your thoughts for a time. Let us regard the baptism of Jesus as a baptism of Sonship, for perfect acceptance by the Father.

There is no difficulty in receiving, from the plain words of the evangelist, this view of our Lord's baptism. But the question remains, whether there is any genuine connection between our Lord's baptism, so interpreted, and that of the sinners who were baptized by John in Jordan. I believe that the apparent discrepancy may lead us to a most important truth, in the light of which it will cease to appear a discrepancy.

(1) Let us suppose that our Lord's baptism reveals the deepest ground of the other common baptisms. The Father says to Jesus, Thou art my beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased. When God forgives a sinner, and declares that forgiveness by a baptism, He is saying also, In thee I am well pleased. *Not*, of course, 'I approve of all that I discern in thee.' In that sense God could not declare Himself well pleased with a sinner. But in proclaiming forgiveness, God says at least that He is not offended with the sinner, that He is at peace with him. But He further says to Jesus, Thou art my beloved Son. Well, and must not God have said this also to every man whom He forgave? In what relation does a man whom God has forgiven stand towards God? Is he not a beloved son of God?

Let no one be alarmed, dear brethren, by a fear that we may be dangerously obliterating the difference between the only-begotten Son of God and ourselves. Our real danger is that of forgetting the *likeness* between the Son of God and ourselves. It is easier to think of a Divine Person as of one infinitely above ourselves, from whom we are separated by an impassable distance, than to think of ourselves as brought near to a Divine Person. The force of the

Gospel lies in persuading us of the latter. The true saving effect upon ourselves is produced by our believing that God has come down to us and that we are raised up to God. And the more we think of ourselves as having a nature akin to that of God, the more we shall be conscious of our unworthiness and sin. The more highly we think of our privileges, the more we shall be ashamed of not living up to them. Let us therefore welcome gladly every warrant that we can have for likening ourselves to the Son of God. Let us be sure that we are not doing God any dishonour in taking to ourselves a share in the acceptance with which He regards the only-begotten Son.

This then is the truth which comes home to us when we compare together the language applied to the ordinary baptism of John and the words spoken at our Lord's baptism;—that the forgiveness of human sin rests upon our filial relation to the Father and upon His acceptance of us as sons. God forgives men *because* they are His children. Whenever He proclaims forgiveness to any man, He is also saying,—and this is the deeper and more fundamental assurance,—Thou art my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.

The publicans and the Pharisees who came

together to John's baptism were not distinctly assured, in that act, of being children to a Father in heaven. We must keep to the interpretation given us, and say that they were assured of the forgiveness of their sins. But we say that this assurance was a step to the other; that in itself it was a fruit or consequence of the other; that they could not have received and entered into the full forgiveness of their sins, unless God had been their Father and they His children. This more precious truth was to be brought out through Jesus Himself. It would not have availed to speak the names, merely, of a Father in Heaven and His human children. This relation was to be *manifested* in the Son of Man and the Son of God, and when He was going forth to His ministry, the first great witness of the relation of God to men was given in the words spoken to Jesus of Nazareth, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

We cannot fail to apply this witness to our own baptism, and to the universal dealings of God with men.

We still say, of our Christian baptism, I believe in one baptism for the remission of sins. We could not afford to part with that assurance. We remain sinners, all we of Adam's race, as much as ever. We stand towards God, without

exception, in the position of creatures who have forgotten Him and offended Him and are hardly willing to return to Him. No message from God to us, no word concerning Him, could suit us, or bring us hope, unless it spoke of the forgiveness of our sins. Most appropriately therefore, by the grace of God, the first ordinance which connects us with Him, speaks to us of pardon. The washing with water retains its old and natural significance. It still, mystically, puts away guilt, and cleanses the conscience. It were well if we could remember more constantly, and feel more deeply, this significance of the water in baptism. But our baptism is not that of preparation for the coming of Christ: it is *after* Christ. He has lived and died and risen again, and is at God's right hand for us. And therefore our baptism claims to speak clearly of the most fundamental relation between God and us, and of the ultimate hope which we have in God. It claims to make us God's children. It is a witness not only that God remits our sins, but that He does so, *because* we are His children, accepted of Him. He says to us in His baptism, You are my beloved sons and daughters: I am well pleased with you: your sins which have reasonably provoked my anger, are not remembered against you. They are put away, as water

puts away the defilement of the flesh. You are my pardoned, reconciled children; and are welcome to the home of your Father in heaven.

That, dear brethren, is the chief voice of our baptism to us Christians. I know how fearful many persons are of encouraging a false assurance by such a doctrine; how dangerous they think it to allow any man to suppose that he is in a right relation towards God until he has felt in himself a power which has turned him away from the world and made him seek heavenly things only. If the assurance conveyed in baptism had the effect of making us rest contented in our sins, there would indeed be good reason to warn men against such a consequence. But how can that possibly be? Tell a hardened, worldly sensualist, that the righteous and holy God has claimed him as a son;—will that announcement gratify him, do you think? Will it lull him into a more confirmed composure of satisfaction with himself and his condition? I should think not. Tell any sinner that God puts away his sins, and calls him,—not without enabling him,—into a state of constant dependence upon Himself, and through that dependence, into a state of righteousness and freedom and safety, will you tempt him to say, O then I may go on as I please, it is all right with me, my sins

will not signify? Could any conclusion be more unreasonable and monstrous?

Or, will you be prevented from speaking of God's anger, which comes on the children of disobedience? Certainly no more than you are prevented from approving of punishment in a family, because you would wish the parents to be good parents to their children. If you would think it just and wholesome, however painful, that a wilful, self-conceited, rebellious child should be punished with all needful severity, you may hold, at the same time, that the Father in heaven will not punish rebellious men and rebellious nations with the less certainty and consideration, because He calls them His children. Think what an *interest* He has in punishing them. Think how much more deeply a faithful parent feels concerned to punish his children wisely, than he does to correct a servant, or to get justice administered upon a public malefactor. Those, indeed, who fancy that a loving parent would never chastise a child, could scarcely think of God as at the same time loving like a parent and inflicting severe punishment. But such persons will have to learn, that neither in the houshold of the Father in heaven, nor in the human houshold, which should be a copy and symbol of His, can the discipline of pain and correction be dispensed with.

There is really nothing, therefore, to deter us from proclaiming this truth to all the world, that God is a God of forgiveness and love, reconciling men to Himself, because He is their Father. Let us be careful, dear brethren, to keep these two testimonies in their close connection, and in their right relation. Let us never forget or think lightly of sin. Let us never regard it in any lighter character than as an offence against a gracious God, needing to be repented of. Let us declare that when God speaks to man, He must speak to Him as a sinner and pronounce forgiveness before man can be at peace with Him. But let us not shrink from maintaining the Gospel upon which the remission of sins rests, that in His own beloved Son God knows us as His children, and that He forgives us and takes us to Himself because He is our Father.

We must say, indeed, that it is in His beloved Son, who has perfectly satisfied Him, that God knows us as His children. But this is not the same thing as saying that none are God's children, except those who have gained a vital and renewing faith in Christ. Without saying this, which there are many reasons to avoid saying;—maintaining most positively the universal Fatherhood of God as the one ultimate ground of hope and confidence for any man,—we are not the less called upon to

testify that we are God's children in Christ alone, and that we cannot learn the mind and the blessedness of God's children, except through Christ.

For, what is to be the counter-assurance, replying to our guilty conscience, and giving us an approach to the Father? What is to be the answer to the voice of repulsion and despair coming from our own sins? You may say to a sinner, God is your Father. He will answer, But I have sinned against Him. Yes, you must reply, and your sins cannot be argued away by indulgent excuses; but Christ the Son of God knew these sins, and came and shared the burden of them with you. A washing was set forth to be a token to those who were burdened by their sins, that these sins might be put away; and Jesus Himself submitted to that baptism. He was baptized with the same baptism which declared remission of sins to the penitent: and with the same movement in which you start back in fear from your sins, you may lay hold of Him as a Brother. See, in Him, the perfect pledge of God's love and goodness towards you. See the Son of God made Son of man, and Brother of guilty and degraded men.

Yes, brethren, let us never loosen our hold upon the tie by which Jesus has bound us in brotherhood and membership to Himself. It is a ground of comfort and hope to us that He accepted

the baptism of sinful men. He shewed in that, as in all His acts, that He was bearing our sin with us, that in nothing would He separate Himself from us, and therefore not in that which was our one danger and misery, our condition as sinners before God. Accepting that burden, coming to His Father as the Head of our polluted race, God accepts Him, if one might dare to speak of degrees in God, with the *more* satisfaction, the *more* love. It was a delight to the Father that the Son took upon Himself our cause, our sin, our misery. In His fellowship with men, He was still the Father's beloved Son, in whom He was perfectly pleased.

And therefore He is set forth to us as a Mediator in whom we may confidently accept the place and the rights of God's children. That acceptance is the true resistance to sin, the true freedom from it. Our Saviour was sinless while He was made sin for us; and His innocence consisted in being a perfect Son to the perfect Father. And so, our sonship, instead of being in any league with sin, is in the most direct enmity to it. The sum of all temptation is the persuasion to deny our sonship. The victory over all sin is in claiming our sonship and abiding in our Father who is in heaven. This doctrine I hope to be permitted to set forth more fully in connection with our blessed Lord's temptation; for it was a part of His fellowship with our

sinful estate, that He should be tried as we are. But before the temptation to sin is described to us, the sinless state is set before us. And the sinless state for the Son of man, and therefore for all the sons of men, is declared to be, that of a Son with whom the Father in heaven is well pleased, who receives and returns without resistance the love of the Father.

O let this sink into our hearts, dear brethren, and let us labour to keep it before our minds as the true ideal from which in our fall we are degraded, the true ideal towards which in our redemption out of sin we must be raised. Let us weigh with solemn thankfulness the glory of that calling which God has bestowed upon us, in making us His children. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when Jesus, the Son of man, our Elder Brother and Head, is manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Let us cherish this hope, as that which will daily preserve us from falling; by the aid of which the great work must be done for which Jesus was anointed, when the Spirit was bestowed on Him without measure, that He might save His people from their sins.

SERMON IX.

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST.

St Matthew IV. 3.

"When the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."

THE Baptism of our Lord was closely followed by His Temptation. But the meaning of the Baptism, as we saw last Sunday, was contained in the words which came from heaven, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And the Temptation of Jesus began with His being led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted.

So we have this fact before us, that the immediate result of the sealing of Jesus by the Father as His beloved and perfect Son was His being led, by the power of the Spirit, into temptation.

We have examples of the same Divine method in earlier ages. The history of the children of

Israel presents one striking instance of it. The passage through the Red Sea was their Baptism. By that act their deliverance out of Egypt was consummated. But in redeeming them from their bondage under a tyrant, the Lord their God was creating them a people unto Himself. He was declaring their relation to Him, and fulfilling the promise of His covenant made with their fathers. He proclaimed and proved Himself to be their Lord, and expressed His delight in them. So that we may understand God as saying to Israel when he came up out of the Red Sea, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. At a later time, God thus spoke through the prophet Hosea, in words which are familiar to us in St Matthew's quotation of them, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my *Son* out of Egypt."

When Israel had been thus claimed through a Baptism, and acknowledged as a son, by the Lord God, what was the next step in his history? He was led up into the wilderness to be tempted. Jesus was forty days in the wilderness. The children of Israel wandered there for forty years, and the whole space of time was one protracted temptation. Shortly before the close of it Moses thus speaks concerning it: "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee

these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." From this language it appears, that according to the conception of Moses, the Lord God, when He led the people up and down in the wilderness, was applying to them a method of education such as might be expected from a Father who loved and cared for his son. The trials of the wilderness followed *naturally* upon God's adoption of the people to be a special people for Himself.

Another instance of the same method is to be found in our father Adam. He was begotten by God in His own image. His breath of life was breathed into him by God Himself. He was a Son of God, and God was well pleased with his offspring. This son also God led into temptation.

He placed him in the garden, having endowed him with appetites; and giving him permission to eat of the other trees, He forbad him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, saying, In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die.

All previous examples of this method of God with his children were '*fulfilled*,' to use the language of the Evangelists, in Jesus Christ. From His history we may infer what God's method is with men universally and therefore with ourselves. We learn to expect that God will lead every son of His into temptation. We learn to regard every temptation or trial, as an act of the discipline with which God trains His children.

Through all such discipline therefore God is manifesting His fatherly disposition, and drawing His children closer to Himself. Each several act of His fatherly government is to be received as a sign of His watchfulness and care. It is a *voice* or *word* from a father to a son. It calls the son to a constant dependence on the father.

And that dependence on God is really the *life* of a child of God. There is a lower life, which is more visible and which never allows itself to be forgotten. But when once the idea of a relation to God as the Father of our spirits is apprehended, then it is not difficult to confess that there is a higher life, which becomes real and active through

a dependence on God and through confiding in Him. Such a life is nourished by whatever bears witness of man's nearness to God, and God's love to man. Any proving or humbling of which the purpose is to make God known is as food to the spiritual life of man.

Now, brethren, let me refer to some constantly recurring expressions, which especially meet us in the Book of Psalms, but are scarcely less frequent in the Prophets, in Deuteronomy, and elsewhere in the Scriptures. The expressions I mean are almost synonymous. The first is the *word* of God. The others are His *Law*, His *commandments*, *statutes*, *judgments*, *testimonies*. What do these mean? *Not* simply the Scriptures. God's "word" never means the Bible, in the Bible itself. The testimonies and statutes of God were not exclusively those which had been included in the books of Moses. We are compelled by the passages in which these words occur, to think of God as constantly speaking, manifesting His will, deciding, judging, apart from what existing Scriptures may have previously recorded Him to have done. God's children were believed to have been always under His government and discipline. The tokens of that government are God's words, statutes, testimonies. Those revealed God to men. Those kept

alive in godly men the feeling of being related to God and having an invisible Lord to depend upon.

The 119th Psalm is one which may profitably be considered in reference to this view. It is full of those expressions. It contains 176 verses, and there is scarcely one of these which does not expressly refer to God's word or law in one phrase or another. This Psalm represents a righteous man subject to God's fatherly discipline, both of correction and bounty, and living upon the signs of that discipline. He says, "O think upon Thy servant, as concerning Thy word, wherein Thou hast caused me to put my trust. The same is my comfort in my trouble; for Thy word hath quickened me." Quickened me,—that is, made me *alive*. In his trouble God's word reaching him, God speaking to him, ministered life to him. Again: "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right; and that Thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be troubled. O let Thy loving mercy come unto me, that I may *live;* for Thy law is my delight." Again: "If my delight had not been in Thy Law, I should have perished in my trouble: I will never forget Thy commandments, for with them Thou hast *quickened* me." I am quoting these words, as you will understand, with an eye to the saying, Man doth not live by

bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Let me add two more places out of this Psalm, in which this word to quicken or make alive occurs: "Great is Thy mercy, O Lord: quicken me, as Thou art wont. Consider O Lord, how I love Thy commandments: O quicken me, according to Thy loving-kindness." And lastly this, which shews that the quickening power consisted in the revealing of God's living presence: "*Shew the light of Thy countenance* upon me; and teach me Thy statutes."

Let us retrace the course of our reflections. I have pointed out, through the example of our Saviour, of the children of Israel, and of our first father, that it is God's method first to own and claim men as His sons, and then to try them with temptations. Temptations therefore are God's ways of shewing Himself to be a Father to men and of teaching men to cleave to Him. And every act of His rule, whilst He is thus guiding and educating them, is recognized by devout men not merely as just and good, but as quickening them or giving them life;—which it does, by unfolding the grace and wisdom and present help of God; the right result of all being, that men become more persuaded that they may rest upon God, and more thankful to Him for not leaving them to themselves.

This being so, what does the devil do? His name indicates that it is his work to sow misconstructions and suspicions. Our Lord ascribed to him the essence of murder and of lies. He succeeds by blinding the eyes of men to their true Father. When the Saviour had fasted for forty days and nights, the tempter said to Him, *If thou be the Son of God*, command that these stones be made bread. The purport of the temptation was either to make Jesus doubt His *being* the Son of God, or to throw confusion upon the *nature* of Sonship to God. It says, 'If God be thy Father, He cannot possibly mean thee to be hungry, He will enable thee to provide bread. If He does not, it is a clear proof that thou art no Son of God.' Or else it insinuates this thought, 'It is a great thing to be a Son of God; use that power which must be inherent in thee as such, to supply thy necessities, and to relieve thee from a hunger unworthy of a Son of God.' In any case, the temptation turns upon the Sonship to God, and attempts to poison in the mind of Jesus His filial dependence upon His Father in heaven. Using the pressure of common human wants, it saps at the relation established between man and God.

Jesus meets the tempter with the well-known answer, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread

alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Observe, first, that the temptation is repelled in the name of man. It was addressed to a hungering man; and it is repelled by the spiritual man. But the words, "It is written,"—or the immediate use by Jesus of a saying out of the Jewish Scriptures,—has always been thought remarkable. The saying refers to man universally, no less in the Book of Deuteronomy than when our Lord uses it. But our Lord, in bringing this maxim out of the sacred books of the Law, is confessing Himself a son of Abraham, and a child of the Covenant. He is not man only, but a Jewish man. Jesus says virtually, 'I honour and believe in what has been taught to the fathers of Israel. He who has declared me to be His Son; He in whom I trust as my Father, spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets. I *am* a Son of God,—but it is of that God Jehovah, who led the people through the wilderness, and who justified Himself in thus humbling and proving them, through the words of His servant Moses, and through the facts which resulted from His discipline. I am the Son of God, and God said to men of old time in circumstances like mine, Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'

We cannot fail to see here, dear brethren, a

great honour put upon the ancient history of God's dealings with men, and upon the Scriptures, which are the records of those dealings. If we are drawn sometimes into the notion, that we have little to do with past ages and generations of men, that our concern is simply with our own interests and duties, and that our life is rooted only in the present, such a notion is here rebuked. Here we have Jesus Christ voluntarily appealing to the experience and teaching of past ages, content to have the God of His fathers for His God, and to receive as truth for Himself the truth which God made known to them. It is not so much to say, though it is very important to affirm it, that every Apostle of Christ in after time shewed himself to be a true son of Abraham and most loyal to the covenant and election of his fathers. The Master is now represented to us; and we see Him throughout this temptation standing not only on the general ground of man, but also especially on the ground of an Israelite man, inheriting the whole revelation of God given to the race of which He came.

But to return to the truth with which Jesus repelled the temptation to make bread out of the stones of the wilderness. "Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." I have been already endea-

vouring to lead your thoughts into the apprehension of this truth, by pointing out that it was the true and authorized interpretation of that method of God, by which having declared man His son, he proceeds to try him. A son of God, to give the name the least of its genuine significance, is a spiritual creature. He has a body. He carries a flesh about him, which is the seat of wants and appetites. But he is properly master of that body, he has a life to lead, over which that body should have no dominion; a life consisting in the knowledge of God his Father. He lives therefore, as a child of God, by every token and vehicle of that loving government of his Father in which he is taught to believe. He lives, therefore, by every word, or statute, or testimony, which proceeds out of God's mouth.

Without limiting the meaning of our Lord's reply, we may safely say, that the particular *Word* of God to which He was most obviously alluding, was the chastening of His appetite of hunger. The passage in Deuteronomy leads us to this conclusion. It is in ch. viii. ver. 3: 'He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with the novel food of manna, that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word of God...Thou shalt consider in

thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee.'

How, let us ask, does a wise father chasten his young son? One of the first lessons to be taught to children is the control of their appetites. By wise denial and refusal, all children ought to be taught that the mere desire to have anything is no proof that they ought to have it. The supremacy of judgment and kindness and of the spirit generally over the appetites is one long lesson of childhood. And where there is a difficulty in learning it, a child has to be humbled and to be proved. It must be seen whether the sense of duty, and the fear and love of those who are set over him, are grown strong enough to govern the indulgence of the appetites. Some *chastening* is almost always required,—some correction done in gravity and in love, and mixed with encouragements and kindnesses,—in order to train and exercise the spirit of the child.

The chastening, then, is manifestly a carrying out of the fatherly relation, and its object is to nourish a loyal affection and a spiritual life in the object of it. A wise child is able to see something of this. After a just punishment, no child loves his corrector less; generally, unless in the case of some extreme perversity, he feels a positive access

of love and regard towards the correcting parent or friend. The very punishment itself is a word of love, which easily reaches the heart of a child. So that it would be scarcely transcending the possible spiritual experience of a child, to suppose him to reply in effect, when exercised under some denial of his desires, and tempted to rebel against it, 'I do not live by bread alone, I live by the moral and spiritual teaching imparted to me.'

We have to do, in this first temptation of our Lord, with suggestions which took occasion from His bodily hunger. Bodily hunger most simply represents all fleshly cravings. It is the elementary demand of the fleshly nature. The conquest over such cravings, we are reminded by our subject, is a privilege and a power which our Maker designs for us. Not, of course, an arbitrary defiance of our bodily needs,—not a habit of outraging them. The maxim which our Lord gives, as containing the truth on this matter, does not point to any excess of that kind. But it does point to a *sure* and *practised government* of our appetites. It implies that there may be circumstances in which a natural appetite is not to be indulged, in which it must be content to be repressed and to be silent. This fact, of the appointed rule of our spiritual nature over our fleshly, is one of the fundamental lessons of our Lord's first tempta-

tion. And there are two others which embrace, with that, the simplest and highest truths to be learned from the passage.

(1) The first is that a struggle between right and appetite is a living sign and witness of our being sons of God. When we are called to deny ourselves, we ought to hear in such a call, a *word* of our heavenly Father. He is saying to us, 'Be not children of the flesh, be *my* children.' He is reminding us of His interest in us, of the living relationship which binds us in love to Him. The contradiction to this voice and word of the Father, is the voice which says, 'You are intended to enjoy yourselves. If duty interferes with your happiness, throw it in the teeth of the duty that you are too hardly dealt with, and say you do not mean to obey. There must be a justification for a man following his natural impulses. Would those natural impulses have been implanted in him, if it were any great sin to indulge them? Man is at least a child of necessity, if not a child of unbridled impulse. No judge will be hard upon you, if you do only what you cannot help doing.' A devil's sophistry, brethren. Who does not know some form of it? Who has not often allowed his ears and his soul to be filled with it? 'If thou have an indulgent Maker, follow the impulse of self-gratification.'

(2) The other lesson is a reply to this. It does not say, Thou hast *not* an indulgent Maker. It says, Believe in God as truly thy spiritual Father, and thou wilt know that He has something better in store for thee than the indulgence of the flesh. He made thee for a better life, He made thee to participate in His own divine nature. He made thee to differ immeasurably from the beasts in this, that they cannot know God as the Father of their spirits, and thou canst. Do not therefore complain of the discipline, the suffering, through which thou must pass in order to enter into this knowledge. Rather be thankful for it. See in every appointed privation, in every trial into which without seeking it thou hast come by the Spirit's guidance, just another proof and token of the glorious privilege of thy nature, a demonstration that this glory is not an imaginary or technical thing, but a blessing to be claimed and rejoiced in.

How then shall we practically resist temptation? How shall I exhort the young especially to repel the allurements which come to them with such an imperious air? In a simple warning. Let us remember our Father in heaven. Let us cling to our baptismal blessing. Let us resolve that whatever loud and confident claims the flesh may assert over us, we will not be its children.

There is a prior claim upon us. There is another parentage which has been declared over us. The loving God, whose nature is to give and to do good, has made us His own children. To yield to the flesh is to deny Him.

The victory over the flesh has been triumphantly won in our own nature. Our father Adam fell, and we inherit a universal proneness to fall. But our greater Head, Jesus Christ, triumphed. Let us hold by Him. Not Adam is the true Head of the Christian, but Christ. As the Saviour thought of the old Covenant and of God's dealings with the fathers, let us think of the new Covenant sealed with the blood of Christ; and say, It is written, not only, that God trained other men by denial and suffering as He trains us, but that He trained His own Son by it, and not without suffering was He made perfect. It is written that the devil could not confuse His feelings towards His Father. It is written that in the extreme of bodily necessity, Jesus Christ preferred to lean on the Father's hand and to be moved by the Spirit, and *not* to please Himself. That which is so written, my brethren, is written for our instruction.

SERMON X.

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST (2).

ST MATTHEW IV. 5—10.

"Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

THERE are two qualities of our Lord's temptations which we ought to bear in mind. (1) They were *real* for Him; and (2) they represent common human temptations. Being such as are common to men, they were genuine to the Son of Man. It is wrong to think of

any of our Lord's experiences as fictitious, and therefore it is wrong to think that He had not to resist in His own spirit the suggestions of the Tempter. But it is also an injury to ourselves to forget that the suggestions made to Him are the same which are made to us, and that the spirit in which He met them is that by which we ourselves may hope to repel them with success. It is comparatively easy to recognize both the reality and the commonness of the *first* temptation through which our Lord passed. If He fasted, He would naturally desire food. If He reflected that He was the Son of God, He might be assailed by the thought, that He might exercise His power by turning the stones into bread. Any human being may similarly feel a craving; any human being may be impelled to use and sell his higher powers for the gratification of that craving. This is what all may understand; and it is also intended that all should understand how broad and powerful the principle is by which Jesus met the temptation,—how victoriously He remembered that the life of man stands in obedience to God and knowledge of God, and how essential it is for all who would keep their lower nature in its true subordination, to believe in the privilege and the calling of their spiritual nature. 'Man must live and gratify his appetites,' says the temptation.

His true life, we should reply, is not in self-pleasing, but in that which implies self-conquest, —in trustful communion with the Father of his spirit.

Let us consider the second temptation, and endeavour first to apprehend the reality and naturalness of it. Our Lord had asserted the dignity of His spiritual nature; He had maintained His dependence on His Father; He had done so as a son of Adam and a son of Abraham, using an experience of His brethren of the seed of Abraham, which had been a lesson for all mankind. He had appealed to that portion of Israelite history which taught that *man* doth not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. Then the devil takes Him to the holy city, the city of the children of Israel, and sets Him on a pinnacle of that Temple which was the sign of God's presence with the people. This was in accordance with the thoughts to which Jesus had been led by the struggle with hunger. He is treated as a devout Son of the Covenant, as one who made much of the presence of God. An argument is offered to Him, drawn from those Scriptures of the Covenant to which He had Himself appealed. It had been said in one of those, to a faithful Israelite, "He shall give His angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they

shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash Thy foot against a stone." The Tempter bids Jesus trust in this promise, and if He is satisfied that He is a Son of God, to cast Himself down from the pinnacle into the streets of Jerusalem.

Why should He cast Himself down? we naturally ask. We may reasonably assume, in reply, that it was to be done in the sight of the people. And we must not forget that Jesus had now entered with full knowledge upon His mission, which was to be a Deliverer of His people. We must regard Him as yearning with anxiety and love towards His brethren; as longing to call them out of their sins and ungodliness; as desiring to teach them concerning His Father, and to shew them the true meaning and worth of the covenant made with them and with their fathers. We cannot assume that anything less than this was in the mind of Jesus when the Tempter took Him and placed Him on a pinnacle of the Temple. From that eminence He saw the people to whom He had been sent. He saw the lives they were leading,—saw their avarice and ambition, their hardness of heart, their intrigues and their divisions, their slavery to Mammon and to their own lusts. He saw at the same time, possibly, that they reverenced the Temple which was the sign of God's dwelling amongst them, though their reverence was rather super-

stition than godliness. Must not His thoughts, then, when the Tempter said, "Cast thyself down from hence," have been, in part at least, to this effect: 'If I make this startling descent from the height of the Temple amongst the people, they will be more likely to listen to me, than if I come among them in some quieter way. Such a descent will be a sign of God to them, connecting itself with their feelings of reverence for the Temple and its traditions. It will summon them, as with a voice of thunder, to listen to what I have to say to them concerning my Father. It will overleap the delays which a more ordinary course of proceeding would interpose before my mission can take effect'?

I suggest these reflections, brethren, because, if we do not call up any like these, such as the situation *must* have suggested to the mind of Jesus, the temptation is scarcely worthy of Him. It must have been more than the frivolous hankering after a display of power, such as the silliest of mortals might feel. It would be tempting to such persons, no doubt, to fancy that from the top of St Paul's, for example, they might launch themselves down safely into the streets of our own city. But when we remember for a moment who and what He was who was on the height of the Temple of Jerusalem, we feel that we must not *exclude* thoughts that would naturally be in His mind in the situation in

which He then was. His predominant feeling must have been that of desiring to save His people. He had triumphed over the temptations of the flesh. Now it was to be seen whether the higher spiritual impulse, the godly desire to awaken and to save His people, could be turned by the Tempter into a forbidden course.

Jesus, then, we conclude, saw how promising such a step as that suggested by the Tempter looked, how effectual in accomplishing the task committed to Him it might be made to appear. The temptation was addressed to His filial and brotherly heart. But He detected the purpose of the Tempter, and the real nature of the course suggested. He replied, "It is written, Thou shalt not *tempt* the Lord thy God." Still He appealed to the Scriptures. He was still a Son of the Covenant, of the seed of Abraham. The promise quoted by the devil was a true one; but before He threw Himself upon it, He would remember a warning addressed to His countrymen in the wilderness, 'Thou shalt not tempt, or put to the proof, the Lord thy God.'

Suppose a body of men brought to the acknowledgment that their life was not a fleshly one only,—that they had a spiritual life fed by words and statutes from the mouth of God. They might slide, without difficulty, into the position of de-

manding that God should manifest His presence and supporting care amongst them. 'True, we live in daily and hourly dependence on God; then let God shew Himself now, when we need His help. This is an occasion on which God should put forth His hand of support.' The sin of such thoughts would be that they attempted to *dictate* to God, instead of submitting to Him. They put the judgment of men before the judgment of God. To think so, was to select a kind of experiment by which to test the presence and the faithfulness of God. Now this is a temptation which might try a godly and faithful man. One who completely disregarded God could not be tried with it. It is the great and special temptation of religious persons. It may assume an infinite number of forms, but the essence of the sin is always in *trying* God. It implies a failure in humility, in trust, in submissiveness.

This our Lord knew, and has left us an example of resistance to the sin. He was not to seek the accomplishment of His Father's ends by His own methods. He was to lead a life of continual subordination to the Father,—to shew forth the Father, indeed, more completely by His own filial submission than He could by any words or acts. He knew that it was not His Father who was bidding Him cast Himself down from the pin-

nacle. He saw that such an act would be putting Himself in His Father's place, that it would not lead men to a real apprehension of their Father and His, but would tend to hide the Father from them. He refused to comply with the Tempter's suggestion, because it interfered with His complete submission to the Father and with His complete fellowship with His brethren. He resisted in the same spirit in which He refused to be made a king or a chief when the people had seen His miracles and desired to set Him at their head. He would be *nothing* Himself, except as revealing the Father.

To say, therefore, I will not tempt God, or put Him to the proof, was to say, 'God shall prescribe to me what is to be done,—I will not attempt to prescribe to God. I will rest in His hands, and commit to Him not myself only, but the interests of this people. They are as dear to Him as to me. It is not necessary for me to urge God to acts of deliverance on their behalf. I know that He cares for them as I do, and that whatever He directs is best for them as it is most proper for me.'

We might draw many applications, dear brethren, from our Lord's use of those words, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." But perhaps the highest truth contained in them, and not the

least necessary, is that which would apply to us when we have most of the spirit of Jesus the Saviour in our hearts. When we are most anxious to do good, and care the most for the souls of our brethren, be sure that the Tempter is not far distant. He thrusts suggestions of self-display and of our own glory into our hearts. He bids us choose the most startling methods, under the pretence that they are the most effective. He draws us on to forget that we ourselves are of like passions and nature with the people whom we wish to benefit. He tempts us to appear in the character of philanthropists and teachers, when we ought to be remembering our own incompetence and ignorance. He tempts us to imagine that *we* love the ignorant and the wretched more than they are loved by the common Father in heaven. Christ on the other hand teaches us to remember and confess that the souls and bodies of our brethren are as dear to God as our own are;—that if we wish to do them good, we must bring before them not our own love most prominently, but the Father's love;—that there is a very great danger, when we wish to do service to God and to confer benefits on our brethren, lest we should be seeking our own glory, and so hindering the good which we desire to do. Really, brethren, I believe we might find a most precious lesson, much

needed for these times, in our Lord's victory over His second Temptation. There is scarcely anything so important to the world as that the spirit of our religion and our philanthropy should be pure and true. Those who have spiritual convictions and who act upon them are the persons who move the springs of the world. A man who proves that he is not a slave of the flesh or of mammon has a power in the world far above that of a rich sensualist. And this power may become most mischievous if the spiritual convictions which sustain it are turned from submission to God into paths of self-seeking and of display. The preacher is specially responsible for the religious part of the community. To these, who profess to pay the most deference to the truths he proclaims, he is bound to testify most jealously. He is bound to say, It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not move Him, as if He were inactive and careless, to acts of deliverance and salvation on behalf of the godless and dark. Thou shalt confess His love to be greater than thine, His wisdom to be more than thine. Thou shalt know that to make Him manifest to men, to lead their faith to Him, is the highest act of service and benevolence which it is possible for men to perform.

I pass over other legitimate lessons to be

drawn from the same passage, to consider the third Temptation. The devil takes Jesus to an exceeding high mountain, and shewed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, saying, "All these things will I give Thee if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." Here again we must endeavour to think what the feelings of Jesus were. He must have been dwelling on the kingdom prepared for Him. He must have been reflecting on the miseries and degradations of the world. He saw what sort of kings were reigning over men, what sort of obedience was paid to those kings by their subjects. He remembered the grand promises made to the Christ, that He should bring mankind into the fellowship of one glorious kingdom of heaven, of which He should be the head. The preaching of the Baptist had been of a kingdom of heaven; the first preaching of Jesus Himself was to be of the same kingdom of heaven; the idea of the Divine kingdom must have been one of the most prominent and the most exciting to His mind. The devil finds Him in this mood,—feeling not for the Jews only, on whose temple He had been standing, but for all the nations of the world, whom He was come to enlighten and to govern. The devil claims the kingdoms of the world as his own. He has strong arguments in proof of his assertion. Every crime

with which the earth was then stained, every successful usurpation, every power of evil which then held sway in the world, might be used as a proof that the earth really did belong to the devil, and that he could do his will with it. So he offers it to Jesus on condition that He will, just once, then and there, pay him homage, fall down and worship him. Jesus might think—'Just one momentary compromise, and the evil one is ready to give up his claims, which seem so strong. I shall only be acknowledging a *fact* in confessing his authority. It is a melancholy fact, that he has so much power, but he can point to the proof of it, and here is a chance of getting the world out of his hands. It is with a view to deliverance from him, that I should fall down and worship him. The results would be of marvellous goodness. The retirement of the devil from this scene of his activity would be worth some questionable act; no great harm is done in a simple acknowledgment of his authority, which may be immediately repudiated.'

Something to that effect we may imagine, without irreverence, to have been the course of our Lord's thoughts when the evil one sought to win His homage. But the tempter was unable to entrap our Lord into such a snare. Once more Jesus appeals to the Scriptures: "It is written,

Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." In the midst of this evil world, amongst sins and vices and crimes beyond numbering or estimating, when the powers that be seem to be actually confessing the evil one to be their Lord, the law of God to all that confess *Him* to be the ruler, is, Thou shalt worship and serve Him only. Thou shalt defy the devil as a usurping tyrant; thou shalt make and incite continual insurrection against him. At all risks and hazards, whatever appearances may be, thou shalt maintain the supremacy of Jehovah as God, and shalt thyself be his servant and subject. This was the principle of a true Israelite; this was the necessary faith for Him who was to accept from God as His Father the dominion of the world. Jesus must reject the proffered boon. He must not take it, even if offered without conditions, from the devil's hand. He must drag it from him with proud defiance, and treat the evil one with contempt and contumely. He, the poor solitary man, must treat the prince of this world as His enemy, in the name of His Father, and must defy him to do his worst.

No one will deny, brethren, how sorely we need to learn the lesson of this victory. What numberless insinuations do we receive into our hearts, asserting the power and dominion of evil.

How constantly we are tempted to make some slight concession, to *facts*, we say—*facts*, which no wise man will overlook or despise,—in order that more good may be done in the issue. One man is desirous of growing rich. He thinks, How much good I shall be able to do, if only I get the command of large means! Conscience whispers that there is something not strictly just or honourable in the course by which he is making money. The whisper must be silenced by the thought of the future good to be done. If the devil brings the wealth, he is to give it up out of his hands: and what a thing to get it out of the devil's hands, and to be able to use it thenceforward for good! Nations are tried in the same way, politicians are tempted to make some aggression, to palter with some intrigue, because the interests of civilization are to gain so much by the compromise. Just one prostration before the power of Darkness, and then by his consent, the Light shall come in!

O brethren, this seems to be the unfailing attendant upon our endeavours to lead true, honest, and godly lives—this perpetual solicitation from the evil powers for one little concession and no more. Unlike the blessed Saviour, we have too often tried the effect of the trifling concession. But when have we found it answer? When have

we really rescued anything out of the hands of the evil one by submitting for once to his mandate? Has not experience proved to us, on the contrary, that to do the devil's wish in a small matter is to give a narrow opening to the wedge, which will then press further rather than retire? It is no less a delusion than a sin to make compromises with evil. The difficulty becomes greater, the effort that is required more vigorous, to free ourselves from the bondage of evil, when we have allowed ourselves to be confused and weakened by the snare of doing evil that good may come.

Christ has shewn us how the most plausible temptation is to be met. We are to deny that evil has any right in the world, and to believe in a power, stronger than evil, to whom all things belong. How shall I do this sin, and offend against God?—must be the answer of our hearts to the tempter. There is One to whom the kingdom and the power and the glory of heaven and earth belong. Let us be loyal to Him, and reject the solicitations of treason. Many servants and worshippers of God may have to fight their battle and pass into the next world for their reward, before the kingdoms of this world are made instruments and witnesses of the Kingdom of God and of His Christ. But

the time will come when the tempter will not dare to claim as his anything in heaven or in earth. Let us look for that time, and live in the faith of it, praying in words and striving in deeds that the Kingdom of the Father may come. We shall have the help of Christ to support us; for His victory over sin is the inheritance of His members, and the feeblest mortal who trusts in Him shall share the glory of His triumph. God Himself is watching over us, and will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation make also a way to escape that we may be able to bear it.

SERMON XI.

THE SINLESS MANIFESTED TO TAKE AWAY SIN.

1 St John III. 4—6.

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him."

WE are not to understand St John as saying, that sin may be *defined* as the transgressing of the Law. He wishes to give us a truer and deeper knowledge of sin than that which can be expressed by any such definition. He desires indeed that we should connect sin and transgression together as closely as possible; but his doctrine is, that transgression, or the violation of law, is the outward garb with which sin clothes itself, the necessary result of sin; not that it is the total account which can be given of sin itself.

Nor have we learnt all that is revealed to us concerning the mystery of sin, when we have been led to regard the commandments as spiritual, and therefore as dictating to the inward mind as well as prescribing the outward act. This is a true view, and a very awful one, of the nature of God's commandments. But we yet want, what St John gives us, an account of sin which with all its awfulness shall not reduce us to despair. The Apostle's doctrine will explain to us that sin is sure to issue, indeed, in disobedience to law, and therefore there is no hope of keeping the law without the conquest of sin; but also that there *is* hope of arriving at obedience to law because sin is something personal, and the *man* himself may be delivered from it.

Deliverance from Sin offered to us, and in that, the *Fulfilling of the Law* made possible,—this is the subject which the words of our text bring before us this morning.

At the time when St John and the other New Testament writers spoke of disobedience to the Law, there was much more of open and glaring lawlessness than there is now amongst ourselves. Crime and vice were much more rampant in the world then, than they are now; and the wild spirit which broke through moral restraints so recklessly in the heathen world, occasionally as-

serted itself by some startling and disgraceful act in the purer and quieter society of the Christian Church. We find that the Apostles were compelled to give warnings and rebukes to those whom they call "the saints," which we should feel to be out of place within the interior circle of any Christian community at the present day. It does not follow that we are better than the first Christian converts;—even when we see what stains there were upon their purity, we should hesitate to prefer our own spiritual condition to theirs. But we may safely say *this*, that the power of external civilizing and Christianizing restraints was not so strong for them as it is for us; we are not in the same danger of lawless outbreaks.

Not but that sin, amongst ourselves, yet proves itself by transgressing the Law. There is reason to believe that the lawless spirit is more artful in concealing itself than willing to submit to restraints. There may be more dishonesty in business, more actual profligacy, amongst us than one who observes only the outward face of society can detect. Certainly there are conclusions which force us to admit as a premiss that there must be much lawlessness somewhere. And from time to time, the more glaring transgressions, the enormous frauds, the murders and adulteries, which

break forth into light, too plainly testify to the power and audacity of the spirit of disobedience. These are truths not to be put aside or forgotten, and they repeat to us the Apostle's maxim, "He that committeth sin also transgresseth the law." But, comparatively speaking, we live in orderly times, and traditional morality has a great power over us, and many an impulse, which in other generations would have burst forth into an open flame of defiance, has to be stifled for want of opportunity.

All the more for this, brethren, and not the less, we want to know what *sin* is, and how we may be delivered from it. We are conscious,—many of those who lead the smoothest and most irreproachable lives are conscious,—of an inward perverseness which convicts and condemns itself. We are conscious of ungoverned humours, of restless, craving, unsatisfied affections, and we are sure that all is not right within. And then, who is not abundantly aware of the want of strength and clearness in his soul? Supposing that we escape being condemned by our own thoughts as being guilty of anything flagrantly *wrong*, can we rejoice in the consciousness of being particularly *right?* This unsatisfactory inward condition, in all its signs and fruits, we have learnt to call by the name of *sin*. Knowing what we do of our-

selves, we feel that we deserve to be called *sinners*. Putting the confusion, the stains, the apathy, of our own souls, by the side of some bright image of heavenly purity and holiness which we can dimly represent to ourselves, we confess, when we speak honestly, that if there is any where help for sinners, any where a remedy for sin, it might be welcome now and to us.

May we have grace then to listen once more to the blessed gospel of redemption, and to fix earnest eyes upon Him who presents Himself as our deliverer.

God has manifested Himself to us in His Son, —*there* is the touchstone of our sin; *there* is the hope of our emancipation from sin.

Think, brethren, of the tie which binds us to the living God. Bear in mind that we are not wandering about, a mere crowd of earth-born creatures, to be unhappy when solitary, to make one another uncomfortable when together; but creatures of heavenly generation, the vast family of God above. Does this seem to us too much like a dream or speculation,—this theory of Divine parentage, of a high origin and a glorious destiny? No doubt it may so seem, when we look exclusively at ourselves. We are not intended to discover it, or at least to apprehend it firmly, by self-contemplation, or by the study of our fellow-

men. The full assurance of faith in a God who is our Father is granted to those who look up to God. This is surely a most natural and reasonable, nay, a necessary appointment. Is it any wonder that we do not find God, if we are not looking for Him, or are not looking for Him in the right place? He may use some means to *force* the knowledge of Himself upon us; but the only way, whatever may be the discipline that guides us, the only way to gain a satisfying vision of God is by looking upwards. We see the heavenly bodies, not by looking on the ground, but by gazing into the heavens; and we may depend upon it, that our Father who is in heaven must be looked for there. We must leave off the grovelling habit; we must forget selfish pleasures, and forego the scraping up of treasure for ourselves; and we must let the higher inspirations of wonder and reverence and hope and trust and love find their way into our souls. Then we may try whether God is not discernible to us.

When God inspires us with those emotions of reverence and hope and love,—when He brings us into the upward-looking attitude,—He also presents Himself to our wondering gaze in the person of His beloved Son, in whom dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily. He bids us look on Jesus Christ, and says, "This is my beloved Son, in

whom I am well pleased." He shews us what Divine goodness is, dwelling in a human form, animating a man like ourselves, the Son of Mary, the friend of John and of Peter, the hated adversary of arrogant men and oppressors. God condescends to ask us what we find in His Son Jesus Christ, whether we see in Him any darkness or evil, whether He does not transcend any ideal which the noblest imagination could create. He gives us opportunities of contemplating His nature in His life. We are not dependent upon *words* for our estimate of the Son of God, and of the Father through the Son. Mere epithets and phrases can never out-do the work of our own imaginations. But a living reality may very easily bring thoughts and visions into our minds of which they were not conscious before. And when we look upon the carpenter's son of Nazareth doing the works, saying the words, bearing the wrongs, recorded concerning Him in our sacred books, we shall confess, with increasing wonder, that this feature and that are not what we ourselves should have designed, simply because we could not have conceived of anything so heavenly, so Divine.

There are those, indeed, who have ventured to say that the character of Jesus, presented to us in the Gospels, is *not* the highest ideal which a man

can have before him. Though such an assertion shocks our feeling of reverence, it may not be undesirable that it should be made, or that we should hear of it. A shock is not always injurious to our spiritual condition. We know very well that when Jesus was *living* the life of which we read so faithful an account in the Gospels, His character did not meet with, by any means, universal appreciation. It must have been more impressive, as a personal human character, to those amongst whom He moved, than it can be to us; and yet how few were they who accepted it and worshipped it as Divine! What then are we to say, by way of meeting any doubt thrown upon the perfectness of our Lord's character and life? We can only appeal to the truth. We can only ask that it may be really ascertained whether that which is foolishness and a stumbling-block to some, is the wisdom of God and the power of God, or not? Perhaps, brethren, the result of a searching inquiry, even if instigated by doubt, might be most useful to us, in giving us a more living apprehension of what Jesus Christ was and therefore *is*, and in training our discernment to the recognition and the admiration of that which is most heavenly and most perfect.

The witness of our teacher, St John, concerning his Master, a witness which the experience of

a long and manifold life made only the more confident, was that Jesus Christ was the Incarnation of the Word of God, full of grace and truth. He declares that through his knowledge of the Crucified he learnt that God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all. Of course if St John had thought of God as of a Being who would most naturally reveal Himself in some theatrical display of power, he could not have seen the glory of God shining forth in the meek and lowly Jesus. What was it in Christ that seemed to the true Apostles so unmistakeably god-like? It was the *Love* which was exhibited in Him,—a Love gentle, sympathizing, active; not a mere splendid beneficence, not a summary abolishing of painful and distressing conditions amongst men, but that which a real yearning human heart would feel instinctively to be Love; no languid sensation, but a spirit and a power which could burn up into indignation against whatever was hindering Love. This was "the bond of perfectness" in our blessed Lord; this was what, to those who had an eye for the Divine, proved Him to be really from God.

Now, in such a Being, was there any *sin?* It is the belief of all Christians that "in Him," as our Apostle says, "there is no sin." But how do we observe that? how do we come to realize it and be sure of it, as we study the character

of Jesus? We might say, that we do not perceive in Him any transgression of Law. But that is not enough to give us the idea of sinless perfection. An admiring biographer may state the good deeds and good qualities of his hero, omitting any of an opposite kind, in such a way that we who read might find it difficult to tax the subject of the history with any violations of the Law; but we might nevertheless feel no inclination to think of him as without sin. What persuades us that the Church is right in believing in the sinlessness of Jesus is that we can behold in Him, as the Son of man, the glory of *the true Son of a perfect Father*. This character, that of trust in a perfect Father, excludes sin. Consider this closely, my brethren. When we see Jesus delighting in His Father and in His Father's will, holding fast His union with Him through all that could separate Him from His Father and inspire doubt and distrust; and when we see, through the Son's behaviour and spirit, what a perfect Father God is, how full, that is to say, of parental love and goodness and wisdom, we say, There is no room for *sin* here. *Sin* is the want of this, the contradiction of this. If man could be in perfect sympathy with God, knowing Him to be righteous and good, there would be nothing to call sin. Divergence from that sympathy, ignorance

of God, distrust of Him, uncertainty as to the presence and the power of righteousness and love, rebellion against the righteous and loving will,—this is sin, this is what distracts our hearts, and pollutes our consciences, this is the thing we are driven to confess and repent of.

In studying the sinlessness of Jesus Christ, therefore, we need not set to work to scan and measure every one of His acts, and to bring each into contact with some commandment of the Law. If He did not fail, under the strongest trial, to abide in His Father and to delight in His will, we may be sure that He kept the Law. Love is the fulfilling of the Law. If the Law is the expression of the righteous and orderly will that governs the universe, there is no fear that a person in perfect habitual unity with that will should violate any portion of the Law.

But St John says, not only that in Him is no sin, but that He was manifested to take away our sins. Now we must not expect to understand how Jesus took away our sins, without bearing in mind what we have just been considering as the nature and essence of sin. If we are quite clear that He who was sinless was so in virtue of His perfect delight in His Father's love and in His Father's will, then the taking away of our sin must be the bringing of us into a similar

state,—a state of peace with God and of delight in God. St John says, that Jesus was *manifested* that He might do that for us. The manifesting of Him was the manifesting of the Father's disposition towards us. It was the manifesting of the Father's displeasure at our ignorance and distrust of Him, of His desire that we should come to know Him, and so to trust in Him perfectly and to abide in Him. It was the manifesting of the possibility of this return to God and this submission to God, because it shewed the true filial spirit working without interruption in a true man, tried in all ways like as we are. The very shewing forth of the Son of man to men is the most fearful mockery of their helplessness and misery, unless it means that we may come to God confidently, that He pardons our sins, that a life of regular trust in Him and of fellowship with Him is not only possible, but is the appointed human life, the precise life which our Creator intends and desires for men.

If such a mockery is not to be attributed to God, then the voice of Jesus, 'Come to me, come to my Father in me,' *is* the doing away of our sins. Do we speak of the penalty of a violated Law? Yes, of course, the penalty of the violated Law will haunt the transgressor until He can see the figure of a Father behind the

Law. The character of the Father does not exclude that of the infliction of punishment; no, but it subordinates and explains it. We cannot say, we have no interest in saying, that the Father does not and will not *punish;* but we can say, and it is our blessedness to say it with perfect confidence, It is the *Father*, and not some inexorable Fate, who punishes. It is strangely hard for men to believe to the uttermost in the Fatherly nature of God; but for this very reason, because men will not know God to be their Father, Jesus Christ was *manifested.* In Him we may see God coming to us with overtures of reconciliation; in Him we may see the incredible power of the Divine forgiveness; in Him we may see how blessed an emancipation is open to us, if we would allow the Spirit of God to cry, Abba, Father, in our hearts.

Now let St John carry us on with him in his maxim concerning a sinless life. "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him." It is important to remember that we are not speaking of One who spent a perfect life long generations ago, and who ended His connection with ourselves when He ascended into heaven. Remember, brethren, that according to St John, God is light, God is love, and that every one who does righte-

ousness, every one who loves, is shewing the nature of the Father and exhibiting the family character. To abide in the Son of God, is not to struggle to weave out of the resources of our imagination some special bond to connect us with a former inhabitant of this earth. To abide in the Son of God is to trust, to hope, to love, to be righteous. To abide in the Son of God is to know the Father and look up to Him; to see in the absolute love and righteousness and truth the features of a parent; to know that He, who is Truth and Love, is caring for us and watching over us, and seeking to make us like Himself. Sometimes men endeavour to *patronize* love and light and goodness, to look upon them as their own children, springing from themselves. This, certainly, is not to abide in the Son of God. To abide in Him must be to reverence light and love as above ourselves, producing us and not produced by us, as names of a mind and nature in which we may rest, to which we may peacefully and gladly surrender ourselves.

It is an unspeakable privilege and help, however, when we begin to be depressed by the suspicions which the enemy sows, that after all, there can be no secure relation between the Eternal Truth and Love and ourselves, poor limited guilty creatures that we are, when we begin to fear that

our hopes and aspirations are but self-spun dreams, to remember Jesus of Nazareth, dwelling with Mary and Joseph, conversing with the fishermen of the Galilean lake, weeping with Martha and Mary over the grave of their brother, enduring bodily torture and asking for the pardon of those who murdered Him. We must cling to Him as *now* binding us to the incomprehensible God; as now bringing within our ken the mind of God, and proving it to be a gracious will on which we may lay hold and be at peace.

When we surrender our souls to *sin*, that is to restlessness, darkness, doubt of the Eternal righteousness and distrust of one another, to gloomy fears as to our own destiny and the destiny of the world, we are not seeing or knowing the Son whose manifestation has dissipated these clouds. Brethren, let us endeavour so to think of sin. It is unworthy of us, unworthy of Christians who have been called and baptized into sonship to God, to be always asking, 'May I do this? Am I forbidden to do that?' We are delivered from the bondage of the mere law, of mere injunction and prohibition. We should ask rather, 'Am I rejoicing in God? Do I joy in the God of my salvation?' Members of Christ should ask themselves, 'Am I holding fast the Son of God, Him in whom the Divine Light and Love are visible and human?

Have I some sense of what Eternal Life is, according to the saying of St John, "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life"?' Questions like these might keep us on our guard against the snares and devices of evil spirits. We should be more watchful against the seeds and beginnings of transgression. It is but poor work to give up the chambers of the heart to selfishness and insincerity, and then to try not to do this or that outward act which the law forbids. We have a right to a more hopeful, a more manly, a more honourable, vocation than that. We have spiritual enemies to contend against, spiritual forces sustaining us. We are permitted to strive for God and His cause, which is something better and higher than taking care that we do not compromise ourselves and injure our prospects.

Yet you perceive, brethren, that in such a belief there is no excuse for him who transgresses the Law. The Law still serves a purpose. Those who care not for God's righteousness and love and for the hopes of a better future, must be kept in check by the bolts and penalties of the Law. When a man steals or lies, he proves that he is in sin. The punishments assigned to stealing and lying are intended to drive him back from the course he is following, and to awaken thoughts in

him which may bring him to himself and make him say, "I will arise and go to my Father." Therefore let us honour the Law and its penalties. Let us see in it and in them the righteousness of God revealed as refusing to tolerate sin. Let us gain help from it and from them in our own individual life. Each commandment may be profitably kept in our memory, and we may observe with awe the regularity with which the violations of law are punished in some misery of the offender and of society. It may be a prop of our faith in our colder and more sinful moments to observe that we never do a wrong act without some fear of punishment to follow, or without some sign of God's displeasure in the punishment that does follow.

But then let us believe steadily that all law and all punishment are but means of bringing us into a state of spiritual freedom; that they are appointed to bring us to Christ. Let us believe that God calls us and would Himself lift us out of and above the region of fear and bondage, into the glorious liberty of His children. Let us delight to look on Jesus Christ as at once the Image of God and the Ideal of men. Let us study in Him our nature, our privileges, our destiny. Let us not doubt that some day He will be manifested to us more clearly and brightly than He is now, and

that when He is so manifested, we shall share His glory. Let us believe that the perfection of humanity is to know God and to be like Jesus Christ, and that therefore this is what we are to reach forward to now, and this is what we are to hope for hereafter. Let us cling to the conviction that we are now sons of God, and that when *He* is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

SERMON XII.

THE NAME OF THE RIGHTEOUS FATHER.

St John XVII. 25, 26.

"O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."

ON Trinity Sunday there is an apparent exception to an old rule of the Church, which our own Church has studiously followed. The rule I mean is that of fixing the attention of its members, through its commemorative services, not on *doctrines*, but on *facts*. Every sacred day or season, from Advent to Whitsuntide, is associated with some event,—with something purporting to be a *fact*. The coming of Christ, His birth, His circumcision, His manifestation, His fasting and temptation, His death and resur-

rection and ascension, the descent of the Holy Ghost,—all these are presented as matters of history, in the form in which they are related to have occurred. If we are to regard them as they come before us in our Church Services, there is scarcely more reason for taking them as dogmas, than there is for taking the Norman Conquest or the death of Charles I. as a dogma.

It may easily be objected, that if *we* accept these as facts, others will regard them as dogmas, perhaps as baseless dogmas; that even if we all accept the fact, the particular view we take of it will amount to what is called a doctrine; and that therefore the distinction we are attempting to make between facts and doctrines is arbitrary and illusive. But these objections do not touch what we are now observing. It remains just as true that the Church has dealt by preference with persons and events, rather than with propositions relating to them. And this becomes the more worth noticing, when there is a tendency, as there has been of late years, to regard doctrines as the only objects of religious belief, and to employ abstract terms almost exclusively in religious discourse;—when, for example, the good news of a Saviour who died and rose again is pushed to one side to make room for sound views concerning the total depravity of mankind and

justification by faith. It is true that when the Church presents a risen Saviour to men, men may answer, 'We do not believe that any one ever rose from the dead,' or 'We do not believe that He who rose from the dead was as you say the Son of God and the Head of mankind'; and on the other hand it may be contended that the belief in a risen Saviour involves an acceptance of the doctrine of depravity or the doctrine of justification. But we may still call attention to this great principle in the religious education provided for us, that, week after week, those who worship in our Churches and who use our Prayer-book are called upon to contemplate some historical fact, and to hang all their belief in invisible things upon One who manifested Himself in a life and in events, and so to apply to their faith such a test of reality as can hardly be brought to bear upon abstractions.

It may seem, however, as I began by saying, that in consecrating a day to the remembrance of the Trinity the rule till then observed is violated. 'Now,' it may be thought, 'we are come to a pure dogma. On this day we are taught how important it is to maintain, how necessary it is to accept, those propositions concerning things which pass human knowledge or conception, which have been deduced from the

simple historical language of the Scriptures.' But I would submit, brethren, that if we have been led along a clear and definite path up to a certain point, we should not be in a hurry to desert it. If the Church has drawn us from statements and propositions to the contemplation of persons and acts, we may ask whether we are now to look away from persons and acts to anything less substantial. No doubt there is a doctrine of the Trinity, and one which it is the province of controversialists to defend; but is that the aspect in which, as believers and worshippers, we are meant to regard the Trinity?

Let me remind you of two things which none of us will question:— (1) The Church, in its terms and definitions, has in a certain sense gone beyond the Scriptures. We do not find the word, the Trinity, nor the statement, that there are three Persons in one God, in the Bible. It does not follow that the Church has done wrong in using these terms and statements; but we ought to remember (2) in the second place, that for practical purposes the language of the Scriptures is that which will best lead us into the truth in these matters. Certainly the terms adopted in later times were not intended to supersede the words of our Lord and of His Apostles. If there is any worth in those terms,

the true way to find it is by studying in the most teachable spirit the sayings of Christ Himself and those which He caused His disciples to utter.

Now we find in our Lord's discourses a perpetual remembrance of the Father, together with the most expressive assertions of His own unity with the Father. Nowhere do these characteristics appear more strongly than in those conversations and prayers recorded by St John as belonging to the eve of the Crucifixion, in which we have found also the most explicit language concerning the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, whom the Son was to send from the Father. Let us take the last words of these chapters, after which Jesus went forth with His disciples to the garden; and let us see how they lead us to look up to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Every clause in our text is solemn and significant; let us touch upon each as it comes, though it must be lightly and cursorily.

Jesus is praying to His Father. "O Righteous Father," he says, "the world hath not known Thee."

(1) "O Righteous Father." In speaking continually of *the Father*, how was our Lord affecting the notions commonly entertained concerning God? He was teaching men to connect with God all their knowledge of *fatherhood*. Every human being

knows something of the relation of a father to his children. In proportion as men grow in knowledge and culture, the idea of a father exercises their minds more, and they learn to realize more accurately what the true function and behaviour of a father are, and what sort of acts are contradictory to the fatherly character. Our blessed Lord encouraged men to bring all that they had known and dreamt of as contributing to the perfection of a true father, to aid and define their thoughts concerning the invisible God. "*My* Father and *your* Father,"—this was our Lord's chosen description for Him whom His countrymen worshipped.

Those who had understood well the fatherly character would know that it implied *Righteousness*. A father who was unequal, unfair, was in that respect outraging his proper character. And unless a man were just by principle in all his dealings, there would be no security that as a father he should act faithfully and impartially. But in all times people have been ready to fall into the mistake of thinking of a father simply as indulgent; of supposing that he would be persuaded by his feelings into acts of compliance without regard to right and equity. Our Lord therefore brings out explicitly what belongs of necessity to the character of the perfect father,

when He begins His last words of appeal to God with the words, "O *Righteous* Father."

(2) "The world hath not known Thee," he goes on to say. The world had not known *the Righteous Father*. It will make but little difference here whether we take "the world" to mean the human race in general, or to represent that worldly principle or element which is essentially blind towards God and ignorant of Him. In either case we must recognize the truth of our Lord's saying. The nations of the earth had *not* known the righteous Father. Their gods had neither been uniformly paternal nor uniformly righteous. They did not know that Divinity would be best named by the words, "The Righteous Father." Nor had they learnt to associate inseparably Righteousness and the Fatherly character. They were always lapsing into the notion that a father would have his favourites and be indulgent to them, that a righteous Ruler must quench all fatherly feeling, at least towards the offending. Therefore the true character of the Righteous Father was as good as unknown to men when the Saviour came into the world.

But that "the world," if it mean the spirit of this world and all under its power, knew not the righteous Father, was yet more evident. There was a radical and essential opposition between the

true God and the world. The Righteousness of the Father was hateful to the world, which taught men to be unjust and false and dishonest; the watchful care of a Father was displeasing to those who aimed at a mockery of independence. The mammon of *un*righteousness was one of the powers of "the world." "If any man love *the world*," it was said, "the love of *the Father* is not in him."

It would be easy to illustrate further the ignorance of the Righteous Father in which the world lay; but it is perhaps more important to remember that our Lord could not mean that the Righteous Father had not made Himself known to any that were in the world. To the covenant people God had declared himself as the Righteous Father; and not to them only, but to all everywhere who feared God and wrought righteousness had come glimpses of One who respects not the person of men, but who with a fatherly wisdom and love judges according to every man's work. But such discoveries raised men *out of* "the world." It was not through the world that they knew the Righteous Father, but through Him who afterwards came to manifest Him perfectly.

(3) "I have known Thee." "I," standing in opposition to the world. The righteousness, the fatherhood, which were unknown to the world,

have been known to me. Who will attempt to describe how the Son has known the Father, to express in words that glory which the Son says he had with the Father before the world was? Let us only observe distinctly that it is *the Righteous Father* that the Son claims to know. He is not professing to have a power, denied to men, of comprehending the Infinity of God. He puts the righteousness and the love of God in the highest place. These are the attributes which the world might fancy it could easily fathom, but which the world *cannot* know. These are the objects which the Son delights to contemplate in the secrecy of His fellowship with the Father.

Let us also observe that it is as the enemy and the conqueror of *the world*, that our Lord here speaks. He speaks of Himself, but it is for the sake of His disciples and of mankind. He who knows the righteous Father from eternity is the Master of that small band of disciples, the Shepherd who goes before His sheep, who leads them and dies for them. His knowledge of the Father is not shut up in Himself: what the Father gave to Him He gave to them.

(4) The words which follow are with reference to the disciples: "These have known that Thou hast sent me." In knowing Jesus His followers came to know that the righteous Father had sent

Him. Their knowledge of Jesus and their knowledge of the Righteous Father must have grown simultaneously. Before Jesus called them, they had very dim notions of the Righteous Father. Their God Jehovah must have been disguised to them, as He was to all their fellow-countrymen at that time, by the clouds and confusions to which the worldliness of both Pharisees and Sadducees had given occasion. But traditions of the righteous God, of the Father of His people, remained in their books and in their memories. And when they saw Jesus of Nazareth, proclaiming Himself as having come from their God and the God of their fathers, and doing acts such as they had never seen before; acts which always had some deliverance for their object and which used a superhuman power in the strictest subordination to purposes of healing and mercy, then the face of the Righteous Father in heaven began to come more clearly out of the clouds, and the fellowship between their Master and the heavenly Father became more and more manifest and impressive, and it grew to be a matter of certain knowledge to them that the Friend whom they followed had been sent by the Righteous Father. They knew that His words were not His own, but what the Father had given Him; that His works were what the Father enabled Him to do; that the

end for which He had come was to fulfil the Father's purpose of love.

Our Lord repeats this statement as marking the belief and the knowledge to which the disciples had then attained. Whilst His persecutors and the people generally refused to know either Him or the Righteous Father, whilst they understood that the Being whom in their hearts *they* were worshipping had *not* sent Jesus of Nazareth, the little company of His followers believed that the Father had sent Him; they knew that He was come from the Righteous Father.

(5) That name, Jesus says, He had been declaring. He would go on to declare it. "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it." The disciples of Jesus, and all who had heard Him, even those who hated Him, could not help knowing how often He named the Father in heaven. From His Baptism and the Sermon on the Mount to His Resurrection and Ascension, the name of the Father recurs in every discourse of Jesus, in every event which concerned Him. That His whole life and mission had been a manifesting of His name, had sought to make the Righteous Father a personal being to men, One with whom they personally had to do, this became increasingly clear to the disciples. The *past* declaring of the Father's name was illumined by

the subsequent declaring of it. For Jesus, when He told His disciples that He was going to the Father, still said that He should continue to declare His name. "I will declare it." No less after His disappearance, but the more effectually for that disappearance, He would be revealing the name of the righteous Father.

This then, dear brethren, is what the Gospel is. The Son of God is making known the name of the Righteous Father to a world living in ignorance of it. Whatever other aspects may be recognized of that work which the Saviour has done and is doing from the Father's right hand, there is none it would seem in which it more naturally presented itself to His own thoughts than this;—it is a gradual, effectual, complete, making known of the Righteous Father's name.

The very message of the Gospel bears that witness to a Righteous Father. It is the voice of the *Father* of mankind who has sent His Son into the world. It is the proclaiming of God's *righteousness* in the forgiveness of sins. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." He calls men to the putting on of His own righteousness through trust in Him. God says to men, Believe in the Father of Jesus Christ the crucified, and rise up righteous men, reconciled, accepted, justi-

fied, glorified. He invites men to a holiness founded on adoption into His family. "Being sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit."

This work of declaring the name of the Righteous Father must go on, and will, by the grace of Christ, go on, as long as there are any ignorant of that name. By His word and sacraments Jesus Christ is maintaining a continual declaration of it. No man preaches Christ truly, who does not present Him as the Way to the Father, who does not hold forth the return to the Father's house as the blessing of blessings. The voice of the Sacraments is not heard aright, when they are not understood as proclaiming the Father's name. We are baptized into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, that we may be God's children, brethren of His Son, citizens of His kingdom. Upon that Baptism is built up our common education, our mutual recognition of one another, as children—not of earth or of the world, but of the One Father in heaven. The Sacrament of Christ's body and blood is the ministration of nourishment to us by our Father in heaven. "The bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world." We eat the bread and drink the wine, as a means

and an assurance of our partaking of the eternal life which is in God, and which He gives for the life of the world. And these sacraments are but signs and interpreters of what God is to the world in Christ, of what God is doing without intermission for the world. Through the whole history, outward and inward, of mankind and of men, the Son of God is vindicating and bringing home the name of the Righteous Father. It is hard to keep that name clear. Men will seize on the one character and use it to discredit the other. They will say that God is so righteous that He cannot be a Father. They will pretend that He is so fatherly that He cannot be strictly righteous. Brethren, such denials shew an ignorance of the true divine righteousness, of the true fatherhood of God. The two ideas, rightly understood, naturally combine and coalesce. But we can scarcely see deep into God's absolute righteousness, so as to behold it passing as it were into perfect love, without the help of the Son of God. He is the one harmonious Image of the righteousness and of the love. There is in Him no conflict of attributes. Men did not ask when they saw Him, How can He be so just and *yet* so loving? How can He be so good and *yet* so just? He was at once the Just One and the Saviour; and through Him we may see God manifesting His righteousness in forgive-

ness still more than in punishment. The very punishment, looked at in the light of Christ's life and sacrifice, must be seen to be grounded on love. Therefore the Son of God, shewing Himself to men, entreating them not to turn their eyes from Him, is now, according to His promise, labouring to bring men to know the Righteous Father. He breaks down their notions, however religious they may be, like those of the Pharisees, when they dishonour his Righteous Father. Nothing will He allow to stand or abide, under whatever pretence, which hinders men from knowing His Father and theirs, and from delighting in His righteousness.

(6) And what is the blessed end which He has in view in this work of His? "That the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." This is what the Son of God is seeking to accomplish. He desires that the very love with which the Father loves Him, and which He knows embraces all who are made in His image and are His brethren, may reach them as it reaches Him; and that He the perfect object of the Father's perfect Love, responding to it altogether as a Son should, may be *in* God's fallen children. Those who do not feel such words as these to be sacred and awful cannot believe them to be *true*. It *is* hard to believe them to be true: but is it not almost

harder to think of them as feigned? Is it possible, as some must think it possible, that the imaginations of men as to forgiveness and love and the highest good can transcend the realities of God? If we strive, with the entreaty, Lord help our unbelief! to believe in such love of the Righteous Father, in such love of the Righteous Son, are we not doing God more honour,—do we not know that we are?—than if we use a mock self-abasement to limit God's love, and to reduce and contract the glories which God is purposing to unfold? But, knowing how difficult it is to realize so much concern of God for men, such a call to the most intimate communion with God, we shall at least be ready to hear what Christ says of the impossibility of knowing these things unless we are taught of the *Spirit;* we shall be ready to listen to the promise He gave, that through the gift of His Spirit He would come and manifest Himself. "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." We must be under a dispensation of the Spirit to enter at all into such promises. Take the things of the world, its pleasures and vanities, all that is limited by the visible and the temporary,—what have *they* to do with that love wherewith the Father glorified the Son before the worlds were,

and with which He seeks to glorify the creatures made in the image of His Son? Eye hath not seen this nor ear heard it; neither the understanding nor the lust of the child of earth have created it. But God has revealed this love to us by His Spirit; He has shewn us what He has prepared for those who love Him. He has bidden us look for nothing less, be content with nothing less, than the residence of Christ the one Lord, the Life and Light of men, in our spirits. He has told us that this visitor is standing at the door and knocking; that if we will open the door to Him and let Him in, He will sup with us, and we may sup with Him. Of course all this is said to the *spirit* within us. If it seems strange to our common understandings, it is just what those who spoke the words said would be. They would have been mocking men, if they had not believed that the Spirit would be given, and that he would strive, not merely with one or two, but with all whom the Lord God should call. Their words should be treated by us as either a mockery or an illusion, if there be no Spirit above our own thoughts and feelings, but prompting and guiding them, whose express work it is to shew us the glory of the Father shining from the face of the Son.

Dear brethren, the revelation of God's incom-

prehensible *Love* is the true path into the apprehension of the Trinity. If we do not ascend by this path, it cannot do us much good to attempt by any other way to arrive at the goal. Let us willingly confess that the mystery of the Three Persons in One God is incomprehensible. But, for the sake of the world and its hopes as well as for our own sakes, let us cling to the conviction and let us maintain it before the world, that the Father has glorified the Son with an Eternal Love when the worlds as yet were not; that the Son came in our nature to manifest the Righteous Father and to accomplish our reconciliation through the giving up of Himself; that the Son of God returned to the Father in order that we believing in Him might be with Him where He is; that the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, in whom the Father and the Son are perfectly one, has been given and is at work in the world to bring men into the unity of the Father and of the Son; and that we,—sinners, selfish, unloving as we are,—in whom, that is, in whose flesh dwelleth no good thing—have had the infinite grace bestowed upon us, of being led by the Spirit through Christ into the Father's presence and home.

SERMON XIII.

LOVE, DIVINE AND HUMAN.

1 St John IV. 19.

"We love Him, because He first loved us."

WE can scarcely pass by, on this day, the subject which the Collect and the Epistle bring before us. The Sunday before Lent is especially consecrated to the study of charity. Our whole hearts should go with that supplication for the gift of charity which we offer up to Him who alone can bestow it; and the preacher, though he may have no new arguments to bring forward on such a topic, may regard it as his privilege to occupy the thoughts of his hearers during the time at his disposal with the consideration of charity, and may hope that some at least, whilst thinking of love, will submit themselves to the operation of that Spirit who is seeking to persuade us all to love God and one another.

The prayer of our lips is that God will pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity,

—that He will make us inwardly and thoroughly loving. Let me touch upon two or three of the reflections which are most commonly and most reasonably used to bring our minds into sympathy with that prayer.

(1) We may speak of the *duty* of loving. It is God's ordinance, the commandment of commandments, that we should love. What are God's instructions, in brief, to His human creatures? They are these, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and strength, and thy neighbour as thyself."

Now the fact that God has commanded anything must always be a very impressive one. It speaks forcibly to all minds; to some it is more influential than any other consideration. Duty, which to a Christian and a believer in God means the command of God, is sometimes regarded and interpreted with much narrowness and confusion, so that any particular person's notions of duty are likely to be imperfect and inadequate; but the name of duty is always a great and solemn one. We may claim then all its force and impressiveness in behalf of charity; we may remember and may remind others, that whatever else God commands us, to whatever else we are bound, our highest obligation, the completest command of our Maker, is that we *love*.

(2) Again, we may think of the *blessedness* of loving. It is a matter of practical experience that true charity, or love, is the chief fountain of human happiness. To the perverse and corrupted heart there may be a kind of sweetness in hatred and revenge; but what a price is paid for the momentary gratification! The vindictive spirit is its own persecutor and punisher. An angry man may be eager to injure his enemy, and long for an opportunity of injuring him as for something good and satisfying; but when he has done the mischief, what a hollowness is discovered in the pleasure of it, what emptiness of heart, what self-reproach, are likely to follow! A loving spirit, on the contrary,—a self-forgetful, considerate spirit, busying itself for the good of others,—may meet with disappointments, but it never turns round on itself. It is always a good, wholesome, happy spirit. The world, we observe, is a mixed and chequered scene. There are happiness and misery, good and evil, mingled together in it. Is it not easy to trace a great part of the misery to the *separating* spirit, the spirit which leads me to set myself against and above others? Is it not easier still to trace the joy and satisfaction of life to the spirit of mutual good will, the spirit which grieves in others' grief, and rejoices in others' well-being?

The blessedness of loving, the good it brings

to him who loves as well as to those who are loved, is certainly a strong argument in favour of charity.

(3) Take a third argument. Consider what St Paul says, and what we repeat after him in our Collect, of the worthlessness of all our doings without charity. Look at it in this way, brethren. Do not all our best acts, all that are simple and natural, and that carry their own justification with them, *imply* some kind or degree of love as their root? Without love, are not our common doings insipid, insincere, worthless, mere impostures, rotten branches which call for the consuming fire? What are the mutual acts and words of parents and children, of husband and wife, without love? What is the regulated intercourse of society without love? What is the zeal of the philanthropist, what the heroism of the citizen, what the devotion of the churchman, without love? Do not the ordinances of nature, and the inevitable ways of men, require that, to make any of our doings worth anything, there should be some kindly, loving energy prompting them?

Those therefore who would have any life and reality in their actions, those who would be speaking men, and not sounding brass, who would desire to *do* something and not be mere delusive semblances, must be willing and desirous to have

the gift of charity in their hearts. It is love which gives worth and substance to the life of men.

These are good arguments, brethren, but they may be sadly ineffectual with us. It may well be that there are those who assent to all these and the like, who hear the voice of God saying to them, Thou shalt love, who know that there is joy and health in loving, who do not need to be persuaded that what is sound in human life is built on a foundation of love, but who yet find their hearts dull, or hard, or irritable. We may say,—and would it not be the honest confession of most of us? 'I know I ought to be always kindly and unselfish; I know I am happier when I am carried out of myself in the pursuit of that which will do good to others than when I am studying my own appetites and caprices; I feel ashamed of the insincerity of my words and acts, and I despise the affectations which coldness or resentment imposes upon one: but I cannot make myself loving; if I try, I may force myself into yet worse affectations. Nay, I do not find that it avails much to argue and speculate with myself about my charity. My feelings do not grow the warmer or the livelier as I pore over them and convict and reproach them.'

It is such a state of mind that I wish to deal

with this morning; and I think our text shews us how it is to be dealt with.

"We love God," says St John, "because He first loved us." He may seem to us, when he thus speaks, to be treating of a different matter from that which St Paul in the Epistle for to-day brings before us. The charity of St Paul's famous chapter, though the word itself, as we must always bear in mind, is exactly the same as that elsewhere rendered love, is chiefly that which we may entertain towards our fellow-creatures. It is a charity which suffers long and is kind, which has the weaknesses and the claims of our brethren for its objects. St John is speaking of love to God.

Just so; but we may connect the words of the two Apostles, if we can see, what I wish to insist upon as a most helpful and encouraging truth, that charity or love towards our fellow-men is best nourished and sustained by love towards God.

I believe it might be maintained that all genuine love *towards men* springs from love *to God*. This would be denied by many, who would shew that there have been and are many philanthropical persons not remarkable for their piety; possibly some one might be produced who has denied the very existence of God and yet has appeared to have kindly feelings towards his fellow-men. If I had to meet such an objection,

I should certainly not endeavour to deny the possession of any kindly feelings to those who think they care little for God; I should contend that those who were really loving their brethren were also *really* paying the homage of their hearts to the true God, to the living Source of justice and goodness; though they might not know His name or profess to worship Him. But I stop short of this difficult question by submitting only that those who desire to love their brethren may best seek that love through and in love towards God.

Even this may no doubt be questioned. It may be said that it is much easier to love those whom we can see than to love God whom we cannot see. It *is* in some respects easier. But love towards God is deep and comprehensive, and wherever it exists is sure to bring forth and to sustain love towards our fellow-men. Where it appears to fail in doing so, we may be satisfied that there is something wrong with it. The Being who is loved is not the real and true God; or He is not really loved. The man who in his heart loves the just and true and gracious God cannot help also loving those to whom God has made him a brother.

But then, how are we to love God, if we find ourselves unable to love one another? Our fellow-

men remind us continually of their existence, of their wants, of their claims upon us, whilst in addition to all other difficulties, we are in danger of *forgetting* the Being who never presents Himself to our eyes. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen?"

Well, this at least would seem probable, that, if we *are* brought to care for the invisible God, we shall do that which is easier more thoroughly; we shall love our fellow-men more naturally and unconstrainedly, if we first love God. And the difficulty of loving God, great as it is, is one with which God Himself has grappled. He has made us to love Him, He has done all that is necessary to call forth our love. "We love Him," so the Apostle sums up the truth upon this subject, "we love Him, because He first loved us."

Observe this first then, dear brethren, that our love to God is intended to be simply and altogether *responsive*. It depends, and is meant to depend, entirely upon His love towards us. If He does not love us, we need not love Him. If He does not make His love known to us, we cannot in any true and profitable sense, love Him. Let us not fear to hold this to the uttermost. It may seem a little dangerous to allow to men that they need only love God so far as they can per-

ceive Him loving them; but it is more dangerous *not* to allow it. Nothing is so dangerous as for men to fancy that they must stir up in themselves some emotions of respectful regard towards a distant unknown being. All their religion in such a case must become hollow and external. Thinking of themselves, and working upon themselves, they will lose the true human freedom and happiness of being drawn out of themselves. Let us be sure that our love to God is and can be nothing more than the reflection of His love to us, nothing but the answer of our hearts towards One who is known to be caring for us and doing us good.

For what will this set us upon? Surely upon discovering whether there is such a Being or no; whether there is One who really cares for us, and has manifested and is manifesting His interest in us. Now the whole of Revelation, the whole Gospel, is a declaration of such a Being. He is declared indeed to be a mysterious and incomprehensible Being; nothing is said which might lead us to suppose that we can analyse and dispose of the nature of God. But we are told that, wonderful and incomprehensible as He is, He has made man in His own image, that He cares for the children whom He has created, that the parental affection which He has implanted in human beings is a true though a feeble image of that which He

Himself entertains towards the whole of His family. Mankind from the beginning were taught to discern the signs of God's fatherly goodness. The blessings of nature, the alternations of the seasons, day with its brightness and night with its repose, have been interpreted to men as proofs that they are made by One who cares that they should be happy.

But men have asked, and do continually ask, If there are signs of goodness in creation, are there not also countless injuries and disasters crossing the path of that goodness and intercepting its results? If we are to take the pleasant things as proofs that we are under a good God, must we not take the grievous things as proofs that He is not exclusively good, or that His doings are thwarted and baffled? Must we not strike a balance, if we are fairly estimating evidence, between the good and the evil in the natural world?

There is much reason in this objection, and it has a great value. It prevents us from settling down into the thought of God as a benevolent purveyor of pleasure to all His creatures. It compels us to rise to a truer as well as higher conception of God, and of His relation to ourselves. Nothing could be more ruinous to our progress as human beings, than that we should

think of ourselves as animals intended to enjoy ourselves. We are spiritual beings, made in the image of God, intended to rise into sympathy with Him and likeness to Him. God's love to us accords with this our nature. It is not such a love as would be unworthy of our nature.

Let us come at once, brethren, to what is set before us in the Gospel as the great proof and measure of God's love to men. He so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son to die for us. Jesus Christ, whom we know in the New Testament, the Christ of the Manger and of the Cross, exhibits the kind of love, and the degree of love, which the eternal Father cherishes towards us.

Let this act of the Creator, His sending His Son in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, be as wonderful and as strange to us as we choose to consider it. But make this comparison. Think of the sort of love which would be represented by the conception of a perfectly benevolent Creator, regulating a perfectly happy world. We need not undervalue that conception. Let us allow any human imagination to make a world as delightful, as free from pain, as it can. No doubt there is something attractive in such a picture. We should admire the benevolence supposed to be at work in the contriving of it. But think

now of the love which the Scriptures ascribe to God. Assume that Jesus Christ is the perfect image of that God who had revealed Himself to Adam and to Noah, to Abraham and to Moses, to David and to Isaiah. Consider the nature of that mind which was in Him; study the quality of that love; contemplate the objects which it set before itself; realize the aspect and the relation in which we men, our condition and destiny, were regarded by that love. And then say which is the more exalted, which the more affecting, that benevolence which the human mind would set itself to imagine, or the love which God Himself has actually disclosed to us?

I think you will feel, brethren, that all the griefs and sorrows in the universe have no power to impeach the love which shone in Jesus Christ. He came as the man of sorrows, voluntarily bearing all human afflictions. In Him sorrow was seen as the very means of elevation, the ladder of victory. As we contemplate Him, believing Him to be the express image of the Father's person, we do not feel disposed to add up all the blights and evils which mar the face of creation, and to subtract them from the evidence for God's goodness. We see them all made instrumental for unfolding the Father's glory and for training His children to the knowledge of Him.

There have been those in all ages who have been filled with the most overpowering impressions of God's tender and considerate love. They have uttered their raptures in psalms and hymns and sermons and letters which seem to transcend common experience, and which people in this day are too apt to ascribe to a nobler kind of derangement. But what do we find uniformly occurring in the character and history of those who have thus believed in God's love? First, that they have fixed their minds on the spirit manifested in Jesus Christ, that this spirit has been real and living to them, and that it has drawn up their hearts to an incessant contemplation of itself. I mean the spirit that entered into fellowship with sinful and suffering men, that sought to raise them by bearing their burdens, which treated men as partakers of the same nature with itself, and thought men worth dying for. Such a spirit has laid hold of their hearts and minds, and they have recognized its glory and divinity. Secondly, they have been persons acquainted with grief themselves, taught to enter into the experiences of other men, not running away with timid shrinking from the burdens of life, but going forth with a certain eagerness to grapple with them and to bear them.

Such persons have known the love of God,

and they have loved God in return. They have never thought, or not thought much, of their own love to God. *His* love to them, and to their fellows, has been the wonder which has possessed them.

And these saints of God are our examples and our instructors. They shew us how God's love to us may become credible and powerful to us; they shew us at the same moment how a responding love from ourselves to Him may become possible. What is it, that the nature of God may remain incomprehensible to us? The love which spoke and acted in the dying Saviour is comprehensible enough. Every one of our intellectual conceptions about God may be destined to undergo a change. "When I was a child," says St Paul, "I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." So it will be; our definitions, our conceptions, will be put away as childish when we inherit our full-grown nature. But St Paul virtually adds, When I was a child, I *loved* too as a child, and when I became a man, I did *not* put away my childish *love*. The charity of the child remains the charity of the man. The love which responds to a Father's love in this life will need no transmutation, will suffer none, in the next.

It is even said that those who would enter the kingdom of heaven must become as little children. In what must the resemblance consist so much as in the faith of a parent's love, and in the unconscious response to it? A little child trusts its father or its mother; it takes every token of affection, each smile or caress, as coming forth from a love upon which it may securely repose; it never tries to measure or estimate the strength of a parent's affection. Nor does it speculate on its own thankfulness and responsive love. If it yields to a disobedient unloving spirit, and begins to repent of it, the child does not set to work to stir up the right spirit in itself; it goes at once to the mother or the father who has been wronged, seeks humbly for forgiveness and clings more closely to the parent's side and the parent's heart.

This, dear brethren, is our true relation to God. Let me put the lesson as practically as I can. God's love to us will be found truly inexhaustible *in Christ*. It is great and glorious in *Nature;* but if we look only at nature, we shall not know its depth, and we shall be often afraid to *trust it*. When we know it in Christ, it will put on a fresh glory and beauty wherever we can discern it. But its essential character and its irresistible power are revealed in Jesus Christ. In Him we see the love of God not treating men as

insignificant creatures to be fed and amused, but regarding them with a respect and honour which may well strike us with amazement. In Him we see God desiring indeed and intending that men should be happy, but putting their goodness and freedom above their happiness, or rather designing that they shall find their true happiness only in being righteous and true and loving and free, in knowing Him and being like Him. You will not soon find that love tame, dear brethren. Such a love, which is the real and eternal mind of God our Father towards us, will always retain its freshness and sweetness, will always make us ashamed of rejecting and resisting it. Yes, that will be our own feeling towards it; we shall be proud to submit to it, we shall be glad to give ourselves up to it. As God's love comes out in growing power and beauty, our own devices and desires will become more worthless to us; our own selfishness and wickedness more wicked and contemptible. Our habitual thought will be, not, we are persons who love God, but, the eternal God loves us. Whatever distresses and disappointments may befall us, we shall enter into the enthusiasm of the Apostle who cries, "What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more

than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

'The love of God in our Saviour Christ,'—let that be once more marked by us,—a love which seeks our willing manly sympathy with God, a love which shares our sorrows and bears our guilt, a love which would endure to see us suffering rather than degraded, which retains as its continual object that of making us through any needful discipline, the free and joyful sons of the One Father in heaven.

Now judge, brethren, in conclusion, whether those who have known that love, and have yielded their hearts in penitence and tenderness to it, will love their brethren or not. Truly, love to God and love to men are the very same principle. We forgive those who offend us, if we know and feel that our heavenly Father has forgiven us. We bear with affronts and neglect, if we think of the continual affronts and shameful neglect which our heavenly Father is overlooking in us. Nay, if our hearts have God's love poured out over them, what is there left in us which can hate or injure a

brother? God Himself is incapable of doing a wrong, of withholding forgiveness, because He is Love. If His nature is mirrored in our own, just so far as it is, we shall be incapable of resentment and jealousy.

Nor shall we be content with idle negative good will towards our fellow-men. We shall seek to do them good. God Himself will shew us the best way. We shall know that we are only instruments of His love to others, as others are instruments of His love to us. What a glorious aspect of the common good will of men; but what a true one!—That the God who makes us all, and who calls us all His children, is using *us* more than He uses the sun or the showers to testify of His goodness! If He chose the person of a man to be the most perfect exhibition of His own inmost feelings towards us, then we know that just so far as we are like Jesus Christ, we are living witnesses not of any merit of our own, but of the love of Him who makes us what we are. Let us strive and pray then, brethren, that we may not mar this testimony; let us seek so to let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven.

SERMON XIV.

THE PRODIGAL SON AND HIS BROTHER.

St Luke XV. 20.

"He arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

THE words which introduce the three parables of this chapter are as follows: "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him. And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." We should remember that both these classes are addressed in the parable before us: it has a message to the publicans and sinners, and a message also to the Scribes and Pharisees. It speaks to both by proclaiming the same great truth, by declaring the equal love and compassion of the Father in heaven.

Our Lord's denunciations of the Pharisees became very frequent and strong as His teaching

attracted more public attention. We see the name of the Pharisees recurring incessantly on the pages of the Gospels, but we do not easily bear in mind how often the occasion of our Lord's discourses is to be found in some manifestation of the Pharisaic spirit, how many of His parables in particular were intended primarily to rebuke that spirit, and to warn those who cherished it. Whether we look backwards or forwards from this chapter, we find Jesus occupied with the same subject. Twice He is represented by St Luke as trampling on the 'religion' of the Pharisees, denouncing their view of the Sabbath-day, proclaiming that the Day of Rest was a witness for deliverance and not for bondage. In the 14th chapter the parable which forms the Gospel for to-day presents to us the Lord of the kingdom of heaven rejecting those who were first bidden to the supper, i.e. the Jewish nation as represented by its most honoured and most religious class, and inviting in their stead the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind. In the 16th chapter, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus threatens the Pharisees with the fate of the rich man, who enjoyed himself in his own good fortune and despised the beggar at his gate. No wonder that the shafts of these rebukes, sent home to the proud hearts of the lawyers and scribes and priests who composed

the sect of the Pharisees, rankled there, till nothing but the murder of Him who spoke them could satisfy their desire of revenge. But though the rebukes were sharp, they came from One who shewed that He loved not only those whom the Pharisees despised, but even these despisers themselves.

That tenderness, it has always been felt, is marvellously expressed in the parable of the prodigal son. It would have been impossible for Jesus to give us such a representation of the Father's compassionate love, unless He had Himself sympathized with it,—unless He had Himself been the object and channel of that love. The parable sets forth the father's love towards both his sons; but while it speaks nothing but encouragement to the returning prodigal, it condemns very decidedly the temper of the elder brother, and shews what his spirit ought to have been.

Let us consider in turn the encouragement and the rebuke.

1. You remember, brethren, that the Pharisees murmured, because Jesus, professing to come from God, received sinners and ate with them. Nothing, therefore, can be plainer than that the younger son who spent all he had in riotous living, having left his father and gone into a far country, represents those sinners with whom Jesus

was willing to associate. The multitude, who are described here and in many other places by the term 'publicans and sinners,' though probably the majority of them were Jews by birth, were hardly regarded as belonging strictly to the Jewish nation. They were ignorant and irreligious, not cherishing the covenant made with the fathers, nor striving to keep the ordinances of Moses and of the elders. As the Pharisees said contemptuously of them, they "knew not the Law." But a portion of them,—those who excited the complaint of the Pharisees,—had drawn near to Jesus to hear Him. They were attracted by something in the words and manner of Jesus. We are to assume that these men were really ignorant and had led careless lives, marked by more or less of open vice and profligacy. But it was not their love for darkness and sin which had brought them to Jesus. It was something of a sense that He had the power and the will to deliver them from the bondage of sin and of those miseries of which sin was the cause. They were beginning, at least, to *repent* of their former acts, of the life which they had been leading. Such are the persons to whom Jesus offers the story of the returning prodigal, with all the hope and encouragement which it contains.

Our Lord assumes, first, that they had been

behaving very ill. The younger son of the parable became tired of the peaceful and regular life of his father's house. He asked to have his share of the patrimony, and having received it, he took his journey into a far country and there wasted his substance with riotous living. There is no excuse given for such conduct; nothing is suggested as in any way excusing it. The ordinary life of the publicans and sinners was not one which the Son of God could approve of, or which the Father could regard without sorrow and indignation. The evil of a godless and vicious life is taken for granted. The question is as to the prospects of those who sought to forsake it.

And here our blessed Lord's representations of the Father's mind become very different from the judgments of Pharisees of any age. The prodigal son is first affected by the misery into which he has brought himself. Not, let us observe, by anything higher at first. He has spent all; a famine arises in the land to which he has betaken himself, and he begins to be in want. He is compelled to undertake the lowest and most disagreeable occupation. He hires himself out to feed swine, and is fain to fill his belly with the husks which the swine ate. Then *he came to himself.* He had lost himself, wandered out from his true self. His wretchedness makes him reflect.

It forces him to lay hold upon reality once more. The veils which hid the truth from him by their pleasant illusions have been torn away. He bethinks himself of the father's house, which he had thought dull and intolerable before. He compares the excitement of self-indulgence, followed by the gnawing of a hunger not to be appeased, with the happiness of a wise and loving discipline. He makes up his mind. He says, I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

There would be much more to say upon the particular expressions of the parable, if I were attempting to interpret it throughout. But we have not time for that; and we must hasten to that most beautiful description of the father's feelings, which we have in our text. "When he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." This is the spirit in which the Father regards such a return as that which has been described to us. If a sinful child of the great Father in heaven has given himself up to self-indulgence, and has learnt by a painful experience the misery of it, and is drawn towards the Father by recollections or revelations of His

gracious care in governing and providing for His family, and is able to say, through whatever instruction the conviction may have been gained, Father, I have sinned; then, if we are to believe the Son of God, the Father comes to meet His erring child with the tenderest love whilst he is yet a great way off, repels him by no stern accusations, cares not to support the dignity of law and obedience by frowns and distance and reluctance to receive the wanderer, but embraces him with mercy and forgiveness, and seeks to purge out the wickedness that remains in him by kindness and love.

No doubt such a description seemed very strange to the Pharisees. They must have thought it unworthy of God's majesty and dignity. *They* felt no disposition to welcome with love and joy the contrition of a publican, and they supposed that the living God was much sublimer, more distant, more difficult to propitiate, than they were themselves. But we can imagine that amongst the publicans and sinners who drew near to listen to the words of Jesus, there were those who would be utterly melted by such a Gospel. We may well believe that on the day on which the words came forth from the lips of Jesus many a publican and sinner went home justified; justified by God's pardoning love, justified by a return into the peace

and order and righteousness of the home of God. Certainly that has been the work of these gracious words in the ages that have followed. Generation after generation, in one Church and country after another, men have learned from the authority of the Son of God, that the worst and most profligate have but to wish to return to God, have but to confess that they are sinners and unhappy, that God Himself may look down upon them from heaven with compassion, all the trespasses of the offender be blotted out, and the rights and blessings of the home and family be restored to him ungrudgingly.

These encouragements are addressed in the first place to open sinners, to those who have manifestly and in the sight of other men wandered from their Father's house. But we may remember, dear brethren, that the most regular of worshippers in God's house are taught the oftenest by our own Church to repeat the prodigal's words. The confession in which we all join,—a confession as strong in words as that of the prodigal,—is invited by a repetition of the very words which the prodigal used. Those of us who cling the most to the shelter and safety of the Father's house are advised, like any others, to say, I am not worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants. And surely it does not

need the entire outward course of the prodigal to produce a *condition* and a *mood* like his. It is possible to leave the Father's house without open profligacy. It is possible to forget the Father and to become careless of His commands and of His love, without censure from the general voice of our fellow-men. The most respectable may set themselves to get what they can out of life for their own enjoyment. They may make self-indulgence their aim and law, though they may pursue it prudently and cunningly. They may let their hearts grow harder and harder, shutting out humility and repentance and consideration and sympathy more and more effectually. And if they do, will not they too hunger? Can the heart of a man be happy in selfishness and pride? God has not so made us, brethren. He has made us subject indeed to the temptations of pleasure and vanity and excitement, but not that we may find our true selves, our happiness and satisfaction, in these snares, but that we may strive against them and overcome them, that our appreciation of the laws of a Father's house may be more deep and intense, that we may know all the better that a man is not created *alone*, but a member of a family and brotherhood. And therefore, the experience of the prodigal, in its spiritual reality, may be continually repeating itself amongst Christians

and Church-goers. Nay, will there be *any* who can afford to go without it? Will there be any whose heart has never wandered far enough from the family home, to need a turning of the step and a return homewards? Are there any whose conscience has never been clouded by resistance to the Father's will, who have never to confess sin, never to long anxiously and doubtfully for forgiveness? If there be any such, we may admit at once that the words of the Father's tenderness may be uninteresting and unsuited to them, that it is doing them injustice to rank them with the publicans and sinners who have to cry, God be merciful to me a sinner, that Christ did not come to call righteous people like them to repentance.

2. But perhaps these persons, and all of us at times with them, may need very much the lesson of the elder brother. When he heard the music and dancing, which the father ordered to celebrate the recovery of his lost son, the elder was angry, and would not go in. Thereupon his father came out and entreated him. We must read once more the concluding words of the parable. "He answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son

was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."

Mark first, dear brethren, the great law and end of the Father's ways. He is a true *Father*. No end or purpose can be dearer to His heart, than the true and complete prosperity of His *home*. Everything else gives way to that. The restoration of a missing member of the family is an event which *must be* rejoiced over. "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad." No reasonings about desert and ill-desert. No moralising, no cautioning and balancing. Only a righteousness in forgiving, only a heavenly morality, which would justify itself abundantly to all the children of wisdom. 'This thy brother was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found.' 'Must we not all rejoice and make merry? Father and family and household together?' O elder brother, if thou canst not at such a season rejoice, if the thought of thy own merits and of thy own claims is shutting out thy father's joy from thy heart, canst thou truly say, 'I never at any time transgressed thy commandment'?

Dost thou not feel that the highest and most abiding of thy father's commandments is even this, That thou love thy brother? Do not those words of thy father, so different from thy own calculating and grasping complaint, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine, go home to thy conscience and thy heart, and make thee inwardly ashamed? Thou too wilt be compelled to borrow thy despised brother's words, and to say, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. Though I knew it not, I have been wandering from home. I have broken the family law. I have forgotten that I was a *brother*, and so I find that I have forgotten that I was a *son*. I have been attempting no more than to be a hired servant, rendering to my father a calculated service in consideration of the rewards which I have been coveting. Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee,—I have sinned worse, far worse, than this my poor brother.'

The elder brother was bound to condemn himself in some such way, but the father, we see, did not deal with him harshly, or cast him out of his house. Was not the heavenly Father's mind a gracious one, according to the testimony of Jesus, even towards scribes and Pharisees? 'Son,'

He says to them, 'thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.' The rich man was clothed in purple and fine linen, in the garment of God's own royalty and priesthood, and fared sumptuously every day. The Father had bestowed on him these privileges; He did not wish to withdraw them. Not once did Jesus say to the proudest Pharisees, It is absurd for you to pretend that God made a special covenant with your fathers, that He has given to your race a most glorious inheritance, that this Sabbath-day and this Temple are tokens of the bond which unites you to the living God. On the contrary, God was saying to the Jewish nation, and to the hardest and proudest of that nation, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. Only be a true son, and a true brother. Only rejoice to share blessings which are given on condition of being communicated, which become sour and corrupt as soon as they are treasured up for private complacency. Certainly the Son of God added that a continued rejection of the brotherly mind, an obstinate determination to turn common joys into a private property, would be visited by a judgment, and that the judgment would be a terrible one.

Let us take home the lesson to ourselves, dear brethren. We who have been born Christians have privileges beyond those of any Jew. These

privileges which have been bestowed on us are marked by *more* and not less of a *family* or domestic character than before. The obligation laid upon us to be true brothers and to seek our highest good in the spirit and life of the Father's home, is stronger than that laid upon the covenant people. Suppose we say to ourselves, 'We are good Christians. Christianity is the best of religions. It is deplorable that so many are ignorant of the religion of the Bible, and careless as to the observance of the Sabbath-day. True comfort and a good hope for eternity can only be enjoyed by those who have learnt to walk in the paths of religion.' Suppose we repeat some such reflections occasionally to ourselves, and—not very inconsistently, it must be owned, with such thoughts—content ourselves with an easy or possibly a more laborious attention to the duties of religion, making our own happiness, present and future, the end and measure of what we do, it is likely that the Son of Man will say to us, Thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and thou knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. He will not tell us that the Church into which we have been baptized is a mere human fiction; He will not tell us that the Sacraments of which we partake are simply conventions; He will

not tell us that when we come together to worship God we are merely pouring out idle words to an imaginary being whom our own fears and hopes have created. But He will say to us, This Church into which you have been called is a brotherhood and communion and family. You were called into it that you might learn how close are the relations by which God their Maker has bound men together, how sacred and awful is the common ground upon which you all stand. This Sacrament of Baptism was the putting upon you of the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, making you children of one Father, members of one head and body, fellow-subjects and citizens in one great spiritual communion. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is ordained, that you may be fed with one common life, and that a life manifested in sacrifice; therefore, that you may be taken out of yourselves and drawn into acts and words and thoughts of devotion and sympathy. The common Prayers which you use are prayers of any saint or sinner who may come together within these walls. Every one who will say, I have sinned, may use them. They are utterly unfit for any one who cannot say, I have sinned.

Thus, brethren, we shall find that our being ever with a God and Father, and enjoying as our own

all that He has,—that these rights and privileges of our Father's house, should only make us more ready to forget ourselves, more ashamed to make any demand or bargain for ourselves, more humble in the sight of God, more kind and considerate towards the most unworthy of our brethren. O may God Himself by His blessed Spirit bring home these words of His Son to our hearts; may He give us a greater longing, more like that of the Father Himself, for the complete perfecting of the Father's house, for the restoration to family joys of all who now spurn and desert them. May He make us instruments and channels for bringing His compassion and forgiveness to the hearts of many, so that Jesus Christ, the true elder brother, may see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied; so that the glorious work of redemption may be hastened forwards, and there may be nothing but rejoicing amongst the angels of God, nothing but the doing of the Father's will in earth and in heaven.

SERMON XV.

THE WORD IS NIGH UNTO THEE.

DEUTERONOMY XXX. 14.

"The word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

THE title of this book, 'Deuteronomy,' signifies 'the law given a second time.' It is intended to describe the fact that much of what we read in the books of Exodus and Leviticus is repeated in this book. That there is so much of actual repetition in our sacred books, both of the Old and New Testament,—as in this example, in the later historical books of the Old Testament, and in the Gospels,—is in itself a striking fact to those who believe that the Scriptural volume was intended for the permanent and universal use of mankind. It might suggest various observations, of which the most obvious is this,—that such repetition is the simplest possible way, and the most

effectual, to mark the things repeated as particularly worthy, for some reason or other, of our attention.

But this book of Deuteronomy is not merely what its title indicates. We do not feel, as we are reading it, that we are reading the second edition of a work which we knew before. In Deuteronomy, Moses is rather the Preacher than the Lawgiver. He is appealing, exhorting, persuading, threatening, rather than delivering edicts. Such chapters as we are reading to-day for our Lessons give us the reasons and grounds of the Law,—the spirit of it more than the details. They are therefore especially instructive, and instructive to Christians, at least as much as to Jews.

I said that Moses is *preaching* to us in this book. You must all have felt the grandeur of his preaching in the fourth chapter. He loves his people and cares for them, we perceive, as only he their leader could, who for so many years had borne faithfully and with a stout heart, their cumbrance and their burden and the strife. He speaks to them with the keenest anxiety that they should understand him and take in his words, knowing that what he had to say to them would be found eternally true and of the last importance to them. He had learnt how

ready they were to shut their ears and their hearts, or to forget as soon as they had heard, and he does not spare them; his reproaches are most severe, his warnings most terrible. But he speaks as a messenger of good, as a witness of a love and a blessing which would outlast disobedience and punishment. He is a true spokesman of the Living God, speaking from his heart, but not of himself; and therefore his words are necessarily lofty and impressive.

But I wish to point out this morning, dear brethren, as clearly as I may, what it is that Moses especially brings out and insists upon in these sermons of his, and what gives, as I believe, the chief solemnity to his utterances. This is pointedly expressed in the words of our text, '*The word is nigh unto thee.*'

There are many citations, in this book, of the laws which had been previously given, many repetitions like that of the ten commandments in the fifth chapter; and we see unmistakeably that Moses means the people to connect the most awful things that he says with the actual statutes which he had delivered to them. He maintained these statutes to be good,—good salutary laws for a nation to be governed by. His mind, if one may venture to say so, was an eminently practical one. If we wish to do justice to the Mosaic Law,

of course we must begin by bearing in mind the circumstances of the time, the condition of the Jewish people, and their relation to the people surrounding them. Given to be practically obeyed and for the sake of training up a safe and happy nation, Moses maintains that the legislation of which he was the instrument would prove itself wise and good. "I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me.....keep therefore and do them: for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."

But the main object of the old Lawgiver is not to recite or to praise his laws, but to testify how *near* the Divine Ruler had come to the people to whom the laws were given. Next to the proud words that I have just quoted come these in the seventh verse of the fourth chapter: "For what nation is there so great, who hath God so *nigh* unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?" It was not merely the possession of the best possible statutes that was to make the children of Israel a great nation; it was the *nearness* to them of the Lord their God.

It is so natural to men,—it was in that primi-

tive time, and it is even more so now,—to put God at an infinite distance from them. The acts of God, working against this natural tendency, have been to bring Himself near to us, and us near to Him, so that we should open our eyes and behold him close beside us. The special dealings of God with Abraham and his posterity had all been, so Moses testifies, of this nature and purpose. From His secret place, Jehovah had come forth into real converse with living men. Moses tries to impress this upon his countrymen, as a conviction which would awe and support and raise them at the same moment. It did so always when they cherished it; the loss of that conviction was always their weakness. To believe in the covenant, and to cleave to Him who had bound them by it to Himself, was the salvation of the Jews; to forget the covenant and to depart from the Lord their Deliverer was their perdition.

All through this chapter Moses is reminding the people that God Himself had really spoken to them,—God the Maker and Lord of the universe. It was not some subordinate divinity, with whom they might trifle, whom they might represent to themselves under some likeness of their own imagining. It was the one Lord, whom it was impiety to represent by any similitude, whom they

must regard as absolutely and altogether above themselves. *He* had shewn Himself the friend and protector of the chosen race; and through His Law He had uttered His voice in their ears. "Ask now," says Moses, "of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?... Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the Lord He is God, there is none else beside Him. Out of heaven He made thee to hear His voice, that He might instruct thee: and upon earth He shewed thee His great fire; and thou heardest His words out of the midst of the fire."

Moses appeals strongly, we see, to the outward phenomena which accompanied the giving of the Law, the thunder and the fire; but his object, let us understand well, was not to bring the minds of his countrymen into bondage to outward terrors, but to deliver them from all such superstition, and to lead them into the recognition of Him who wields every power of the universe at all times, but whose own invisible spiritual nature is infinitely more awful than the terrors of thunder and

of fire. Mark how the ten commandments are introduced in the next chapter. The sense and purpose of the Lawgiver's words remain just the same. "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire." 'With us! you and me, the living sinful men that stand here at this moment; the Lord God that rules in the heavens, the Lord whom the nations fear when He thunders and whose dominion they then confess, He has actually spoken to us, and the words which I repeat were His!' There was no worship of the thunder and the fire; these things were to arrest the senses merely. The true voice was that of the unseen Lord, who had been manifesting Himself by acts of mercy. The question which Moses wishes to awaken, was not whether Jehovah was not a very terrible and powerful God, but what He had said, what commandments He had given, what kind of a Ruler He had proved Himself to be. Moses testified, to consciences which returned a yea and amen to his witness, that the God of Israel was a loving and merciful and *jealous* God,—a God seeking the *hearts* of His people, and who would not be satisfied without them; that His covenant

with them,—His promise of blessing,—was a real and living thing, grounded in the Will which governed the universe: 'If you refuse to worship this spiritual Lord and Friend, and choose instead to worship images of your own making, you shall and must utterly perish; but at any moment, in the depth of sin and degradation, if you turn to the Lord your God, you will find Him near as ever,—merciful as ever.' "If thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."

But the 30th chapter, the discourse which contains our text, speaks perhaps most clearly and closely of the spiritual relation between God and His people. The God of Abraham had given to that race a sign in their bodies, to separate them to Himself from the surrounding nations. But now Moses tells them the mystery of that sign, what it might lead them to hope and look for. "The Lord thy God will *circumcise thine heart*, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." Nothing less than that was implied in the covenant between God and His people. He loved them, and would teach them as well as ask them to love Him in return. As He made them His own by outward election, so He would make them His own by an inward

grace prevailing upon their spirits. The words they were to keep were written down in a book,—'commandments and statutes written in this book of the Law;' but they were not to be regarded as a dead code, they were to be received as witnesses of a living Voice,—a Voice earnest, practical, *alive*. "For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." Just add a few more words from the end of the chapter,—"Choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and thou mayest cleave unto Him; for He is thy life, and the length of thy days,"—and I think we shall all feel, brethren, that the speaker of these discourses is bearing witness with all his heart and soul to a spiritual government exercised by God Himself over the secret parts, to a relation between God and men in which God revealed Himself as a God of love and help, the fountain of inward spiritual

strength, and in which man's part was to love and trust, and therefore to obey, and so to live and be happy.

Now let us turn to another Jewish preacher who discourses about the same Law with the same fervour. St Paul says, Romans x., that Israel, for whom his heart's desire and prayer was that they might be saved, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, had not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. "For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth." And then he adds, "For Moses describeth the righteousness which is *of the Law*, that the man which doeth these things shall live by them. *But* the righteousness which is of *faith* speaketh on this wise...." Here, then, St Paul appears to *contrast* the doctrine of Moses with the doctrine which he preached concerning Christ. Certainly he sets in opposition the righteousness of works and the righteousness of faith,—the righteousness which those sought to establish who knew only the saying, 'He that doeth these things shall live by them;' and the righteousness bestowed upon and reckoned unto those who were content to receive Christ as the revealer of God, and to rest upon God's righteousness. But, as we have been learning, Moses was most eager to per-

suade his countrymen that it was only by cleaving to the Lord God with heart and soul, that is, surely, by *faith*, that they could be righteous and live. Must we suppose, then, that St Paul did not understand, or that he misrepresented Moses? The simplest and most conclusive answer to such a question is to look at the words which St Paul attributes to the righteousness which is of faith. That righteousness speaketh on this wise:—how? "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven, or who shall descend into the deep? but what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart." St Paul, then, was actually quoting Moses, and chose those words which have appeared to us to represent most forcibly the Lawgiver's inner mind, to express his own teaching in opposition to the way the Jews of his time were following in apparent obedience to Moses. It thus becomes clear to us that what St Paul condemned was *the letter of the Law, separated* from the Lord God, the life and strength of His people's hearts. The righteousness which was hollow and hopeless was that of those who tried to add doing to doing, task to task, without any thought of giving up their hearts to Him who claimed them with a holy jealousy. To plead against and triumph over a dead Law, a Law existing only in decrees and observances; to denounce

a righteousness self-created and self-trusting, was not in the least to contradict the noble and inspired Lawgiver, but to speak in his very spirit and words.

St Paul, however, does add to the words of Moses. Moses had declared how needless it was to go up to the heaven or across the seas to bring from thence *the commandment, the word*, of which he was the spokesman,—so nigh and inward and spiritual was it. St Paul translates the 'commandment' and the 'word' into '*Christ.*' He takes a similar liberty in another place. The fathers who followed Moses through the sea and the wilderness, he says, all drank of the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual rock which followed them, and that Rock was Christ. Moses would have spoken, no doubt, of their drinking life and refreshment from the *Word* of God. But he would have insisted that this could not be a *dead* word. Only the living could give life. It must have been the living voice of the living God, the word, the mind, the will, of God Himself. To rest on God's word was necessarily nothing else than to cleave to God, the life and strength of His people. St Paul, not changing the thought, scarcely even developing it, puts the name of *Christ* upon that living word. The rock that gave the water was Christ. The saving word, which

awakened the righteousness of faith, was Christ. Christ, the Word of God, the medium of communication between the Absolute God and the minds of His spiritual creatures, was not to be fetched down after some difficult ascent in search of Him; He was not to be looked for in some lower deep: where was He? In the hearts of men; in that spiritual region where there is no distance but that of voluntary departure from God. Christ had come nigh to men, so nigh that they might rest upon Him and make His righteousness their own; so nigh that they might refuse to make out a case of their own before God, might refuse to justify themselves, because they might claim, by God's own appointment, to be regarded in Christ, and to put on His justification.

"It pleased God to reveal His Son *in me*," says the same Apostle, speaking of his conversion. He had before been going about to establish his own righteousness, upon the isolated barren principle, He that doeth these things shall live by them. He had tried to do the things, but they remained mostly undone, and then they threatened and dismayed him. But in the appointed time God drew aside the veil which had hidden His Son, the life and strength of men, from the eye of the zealous Pharisee. A voice came to him too, in thunder and fire, which reached him as a living man, and

made a covenant with him. The voice which laid hold of him was that of his true Lord and Master, in whom he found his wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. He answered the voice, in trembling but in faith, and he rose up justified. Confessing with his mouth the Lord Jesus, and believing in his heart that God had raised him from the dead, he was saved.

Dear brethren, let us be thankful disciples of Moses and of St Paul. Think for a moment how much we need to have their teachings impressed upon us. God's voice,—does not that at times seem exceedingly remote from us? Is it not too often separated from us by the infinite spaces of the universe? Do we not often fancy that the utmost we can hope for is to catch some faint uncertain echoes of it received and prolonged by a series of centuries? Or do we know well the Living God, the Master of us all, as conversing with us in our hearts, telling us of His love and care, shewing us the way we should walk in, holding out His own glory as our reward? Is our hunger and thirst for righteousness, or for anything more transitory and unsubstantial? Do we earnestly desire to do the thing that is right, and not only so, but to be made right and true in ourselves? Ah, that is a searching question, my brethren. Can we look up to the God who has

power to circumcise the heart, and ask Him to make us true and clean without reserve in the inward parts? If we are desiring that, God Himself has put the wish into our hearts; it is a demonstration of His nearness and His interest in us. And then we may rejoice to believe that it is His covenant with us, a covenant sealed with the blood of Christ, to make us righteous like Himself, to give us His own righteousness.

Christ risen from the dead, set forth to us who are now alive upon the earth so many ages after His resurrection by word and sacraments, is the bond of God's covenant with us. He shews us God's power to redeem, the power of God's sacrificing love. He shews us our rights before God, the place in the Father's home which is ours to claim, the place in the Father's heart which we have never lost. He shews us in what spirit, with what purpose God is now bringing us into being, generation after generation, and guiding and governing us upon the earth. He shews us the standard of Divine perfection, the standard of human growth. We stand in Him and in His sacrifice, and not in ourselves, before God; we are to grow up unto Him, He desires to be formed Himself within us.

This message, brethren, has been sent forth freely throughout the world; but ask whether

anywhere anything *better* has been heard? The righteousness offered to those who will love a God who seeks and loves them, is not an exclusive privilege. It is lost as soon as it begins to be hugged as the property of individuals or of classes. Every man who has found it is bound to call other men to the enjoyment of it as theirs also. It is common and universal as the air and the sunshine. But has anything been ever discovered for which men could travel to the uttermost parts of the earth or dig down into its bowels, of more price than the air and the sunshine?—God's grace, brethren, God's righteousness, the blessed Gospel of the revelation of His grace and righteousness in Jesus Christ our Lord, these are the universal treasures of humanity, priceless just because they are universal. They are nigh to us, perpetually nigh, in our very hearts, in our mouths. If the Lord opens our lips, our mouths will shew forth His praise. We shall confess, as every tongue shall one day confess, that Jesus Christ the crucified is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. We shall turn away from the worship of visible things, from self-seeking and self-trust, to the maker of visible things, who is also the maker of the *in*visible, and whom we may trust more reasonably than we can ourselves, because He is

the Father of our spirits, and has begotten them for filial love and obedience. We shall cleave to Him because we have learnt to look upon Him as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, justifying the ungodly and sinful in Him and for His sake. The worse and the more distressing the experience we gain of our own foolishness, ignorance, obstinacy, wickedness, the more we shall cling in hope, and that hope will be nourished by constant fulfilment, to Him who helps the helpless and comforts the desponding, whose answer to all who appeal to Him is the same now as of old, "My grace in sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

SERMON XVI.

THE OLD TESTAMENT BEARING WITNESS OF CHRIST.

St John V. 39, 40.

"Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

IT has been thought by some of those who are most competent to give an opinion in such matters, that, instead of '*Search* the Scriptures,' we ought to have here '*Ye search* the Scriptures.' The original word will bear either translation equally well, and the question, which is to be chosen, must depend on the general sense and argument of the passage.

It is contended by those who would alter our received version, that if we read 'ye search,' the whole passage is more consistent with itself. Our Lord is then saying, You think you have eternal

life in the Scriptures, and you are therefore in the habit of searching them. Now these very Scriptures are throughout bearing witness of me; and yet you will not come to me, that you may have life. What a disregard you are practically shewing of that very book which you make a principle of searching!

I have mentioned this opinion, brethren, not because I think we are compelled to give up, in its favour, the reading we have in our English Bibles, but because it brings out, in a slightly different form, the true sense which the passage, in either case, must bear, and which might easily escape our notice. Let us understand our Lord to be saying, with an emphasis on the first word, '*Search* those Scriptures, in which you think you have eternal life. A book to which you attach such importance, is surely worth examining. If you knew the real meaning of these Scriptures, you would see that they are testifying of me. They do not contain eternal life in themselves, but they speak of one in whom is eternal life and who can give it. Yet you, the worshippers of the Scriptures, will not come to Him of whom they testify, that ye may have life.'

Now mark here, first, brethren, the estimation in which the Scriptures were held by the Jews, and afterwards, what our blessed Lord tells us

concerning the Scriptures and concerning Himself.

1. Ye think, says Christ to the Jews, that in the Scriptures ye have eternal life. It is very strong language. They were giving to the Scriptures the highest character they could conceive of. It is a fact of grave importance, that those who thought most highly of the Scriptures were those who were most obstinate and most guilty in rejecting the Saviour.

We know that Moses was read in the synagogues every Sabbath-day. The scribes and lawyers so often mentioned were men whose business it was to write copies of the Scriptures for use and circulation, and to comment upon the text of them. The Pharisees were distinguished from the rest of their countrymen as much by their devotion to the Scriptures as by anything else. When they wished to pour contempt upon the people, they cursed them as not knowing the Law. They held that the very letter of the Scripture ought to be rigidly enforced. Many fanciful customs had grown up, by which they intended to shew their reverence for the sacred books. Whatever other complaint might be brought against the Pharisees, the chief enemies of Jesus,—they could not be accused of neglecting their Bible.

This, then, was the position of things. The

Pharisees were holding the books of Moses and the Prophets in their hands, boasting of these records of their covenant, claiming to possess the most minute knowledge of them. A man comes to them from Galilee, speaking words of authority, doing acts of authority, in the name of the God of Moses and the Prophets. The Pharisees are not long in rejecting Him. Those worshippers of the Scriptures saw nothing Divine in the carpenter's son of Nazareth. How was this?

2. Our Lord plainly affirms that they did not understand their Scriptures, or they would not have rejected Him. "These are they which testify of me." "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me."

Now in what sense did Moses write of Christ? How much is there in the five books, from Genesis to Deuteronomy, written concerning Christ? At first sight, not much. Shall we hunt through these books for the passages which look like predictions relating to Him? If we do, we shall find a few such verses. There is the promise, so early in Genesis, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Next follows the promise given to Abraham, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Perhaps we should have to go on from that to the words of Moses concerning a Prophet like unto him-

self, whom the Lord God was to raise up unto them.

Had the Pharisee students of the Bible missed these texts? Had their reading been so utterly careless, that the very passages which would be most likely to arrest the attention of every Jew had failed to attract their notice? Did our Lord exhort them to search the Scriptures that they might discover these predictions?

It is impossible, brethren, that the Pharisees should have been ignorant of them. In all probability these were favourite texts with the men whom Jesus was addressing. But how far would they go in compelling them to believe in Jesus? Suppose some follower of Jesus, anxious to enforce the claims of his Master, had quoted these texts to a Scripture-loving Pharisee, he might have answered to this effect: 'I know perfectly well that a Messiah has been promised who shall bruise the serpent's head, in whom all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, who will resemble Moses. But what is to convince me that this particular Galilean is that Messiah? I do not see that this wandering preacher is bruising the serpent's head. He does not seem like one in whom all the world is to be blessed. The Messiah was to be a greater person than our great Lawgiver Moses: how can this man, who gives laws to so few, be the Mes-

siah?' So a Pharisee learned in the Scriptures might have argued. How could he have been answered? In other words, what did our Lord mean when He said, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me"? This is a question which cannot be settled off hand.

Let us see how Jesus describes Himself, as He actually was, and as He was then and there shewing Himself to the Pharisees. The words that follow our text are these,—"I receive not honour from men." And again, immediately, "I am come in my Father's name,"—not in my own name, but in my Father's. "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust." Consider these words carefully, dear brethren. The pretension of Jesus was that He had come from the Father. He suppressed *Himself* entirely, except as declaring the Father. Carrying out His profession in act, He was indifferent to the honour coming from men, and thought only of satisfying the Father in heaven.

It was such a man, with such a message and testimony, that the Pharisee readers of Moses were rejecting. In rejecting Him, they were shewing ignorance of the Father. This ignorance was what they were incessantly shewing. They shewed it by their greediness for the honour which men

bestowed. "How can ye believe," asked Jesus, "which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?" Observe, brethren, the character which our Lord thus ascribes to *belief*. He makes it dependent upon the moral condition of the man. His complaint against the Pharisees is this: 'You are worldly and covetous; you cannot really believe Moses, because you are not believing in God; inasmuch as you do not believe Moses, you do not believe in me.'...'If you were seeking honour from the invisible God, you would easily believe what Moses has recorded of God; if you were believing what Moses has recorded of God, you would have no difficulty in receiving me.'

The words that I have already quoted from this discourse seem to prove that our Lord did not mean to say that Moses was everywhere predicting His coming. He says that Moses would accuse his professed admirers to the Father: of what would he accuse them? Apparently of being so given up to worldliness, that in their hearts they would not hear of the Father. Moses was speaking of the Son who would perfectly seek and do the Father's will, because he was speaking of the Father, and of the Father manifesting Himself to men.

This of itself is a hint to us of the light in which we should read the books of Moses. But

they speak plainly enough of themselves. At the very beginning, we have the Eternal God uttering Himself in light, and order, and beneficence. He makes man in His own image. This is the most important testimony of Moses concerning Christ. God made man in His own image, in the image of God created He him. The man so created is provided for and governed by God. The invisible Creator watches over the works of His hands and over the offspring of His own nature. God is represented throughout Genesis as speaking with his human creatures, punishing them when they go astray from Himself, seeking to be loved and trusted by them. Everywhere He points to the future, a future to be realized in the glory and dignity of the human race. Every man, and every tribe of men, is under the government of One who has great ends in view for men.

The call of Abraham is one of the most memorable events in the Mosaic history. In that, God reveals Himself to the *faith* of a man, teaches a man whom He calls to *trust* Him without reserve. Here is a declaration that faith in God is the true act for every child of man, that the Creator of mankind is a Being that each man ought to trust, to whom each man may safely commit Himself. When God had trained the faith of Abraham, He gave him a promise that in his seed, the

seed of the man of faith, all the nations of the earth should be blessed. This promise was to be kept steadily before the mind of every descendant of Abraham. God teaching man to trust Him, God purposing to bless all mankind, was the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of Joseph and of Moses, the God who brought the sons of Abraham by a great deliverance from the house of bondage into the land of their inheritance. To the people so rescued and established, God made Himself known by laws and commandments, teaching them to consider themselves bound to Him, bidding them observe His statutes because He had loved them and in order that they might know Him. He gave them the position and privileges of His children, and taught them to aspire to the knowledge and love of Him as their Father. He impressed upon them the truth that His Will was that by which in all things they were to be guided, and that in obedience to that Will they would prosper and be blessed.

From time to time, in accordance with these disclosures of His own nature and of His relation to men, and of His purposes for men, He gave hints of One in Whom his character would be completely manifested, who would shew how closely men were related to God, in whom all the purposes of blessing should be accomplished.

All this, dear brethren, every reader of the books of Moses may observe. The question we have to ask, is, whether Moses, so writing, was testifying of Jesus of Nazareth. I trust we may be enabled, if only partially and dimly, to perceive that it is so.

Let us imagine a Jew, in our Lord's time, having the revelation of God which was given through Moses clearly before his eyes. Let him be thinking, above all things, of God having made man in His own image, and having trained men by paternal discipline to trust and love Him as a Father. Let him remember how the Eternal God conversed with his fathers, with Adam, with Noah, with Abraham, with Moses in the burning bush, with the children of Israel in the tabernacle. Let him be filled with the expectation of One who should come in the name and power of this God of his fathers. So much we might not unreasonably suppose a Jew to be thinking and feeling.

To him there comes a Man, clothed indeed with none of the vulgar human greatness; not a prince, but as a servant in station; not rich, but poor; not instructed in philosophies or languages or arts, but with the simple training of the citizen of a Galilean town. He calls Himself the Son of Man, and speaks of being sent by the Father in heaven. Here were words to arrest at once the

observation of a faithful Jew. Hearing them, he would be surrounded by an atmosphere in which differences of worldly station would be dissolved. The love of the unseen God, the hopes of the children of men, these are not dependent on the garb of royalty, or the respectful observances of retainers. But the faithful Jew would fix his eyes the more earnestly and the more searchingly on the person of Jesus. 'What are the words He says?' he would ask. 'What are the acts He does?' 'What is His character?' And then he would perceive all that God Himself had called forth in Moses, in Abraham, in all the fathers, as believers in Himself, steadily shining forth in Jesus. He would remember how they, the fathers, had struggled to trust in God, failing often through their weakness and waywardness. He would understand how thoroughly trust in God, delight in God's will, had been shewn to be the right and the best things for man. 'Here,' he would see and feel more and more,—'here is a Man, He calls Himself the Son of Man, who is plainly giving Himself up in all things to the Father's will. Manifestly it is the *Father's* will, because everything He does is so good and gracious. He is quite indifferent to the flattery of men; He is studying the will of God. And God is owning Him. He is doing works such as none other man

has done. He is healing the sick, casting out devils. This must be the kingdom of God establishing itself. This mighty worker must be *the* Man; He must be *the* Son of God.'

Observe what help Jesus gave to his countrymen in following such a line of thought. He openly proclaimed all these principles, and called for an examination of His actions. He says, just before the words in our text: "I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true." He tells the Pharisees that if He had come *in his own name*, they would have received Him. It was because He came not in His own name, but in his Father's, that they rejected Him.

It is a very wonderful saying, brethren, as it was a very awful rebuke to the Pharisees. That unwillingness to receive One whose only object was to do His Father's will, to carry out the good pleasure of Him who was not known by voice or shape, cannot have been peculiar to the Pharisees exclusively. There must be something in human nature which does not like to be reminded of the invisible God who loves and watches over us all, which has no desire to behold in the life of a man the fulness of faith in God, of obedience to God's

heavenly will. Our Lord says to those who worshipped the Scriptures and rejected Him: "Ye have not *the word of the Father* abiding in you." God the Father is speaking to your inward ear, but you will not hear His voice. You are not willing to hold converse and communion with Him. You do not cherish His utterances concerning Himself, you make no answer to Him. That is why you do not receive the Man whom God, who made man in His own image, has sent to bear witness of Him.

It was not a question whether they paid quite the due honour to Jesus of Nazareth. It was not at all a question whether they regarded Him as a man or as God. The question was, whether that perfect abnegation of a separate will and work, that perfect surrender of the whole being to the will and work of the Father who speaks to all men, was essentially human and Divine:—whether, God having made man in His own image, the Man who beyond all others submitted Himself to the Father, bore the image of God most perfectly. This the Pharisee denied; this, according to Jesus, Moses and the Scriptures taught. They taught men to look for the clearest image of God in the most complete respondence to the Father's will.

"I know you," said the Son of Man to his

hearers, with that glance into their consciences which was always his most powerful miracle, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you." It was no use for them to talk of the Law and the Covenant and the Scriptures, no use to know every verse of the Bible by heart, if they did not let the Scriptures lead them into the knowledge and love of God. It was worse than useless to prize the written records of God's ways, and at the same time to shut out His living word.

Brethren, let us take this warning to heart. To us Protestants it might be said, In the sacred Scriptures ye think ye have eternal life. We need not stop to ask whether we *have* eternal life in the Scriptures;—in what sense such a notion may be true, in what sense it is idolatrous. Let us hear the warning, '*Search* these Scriptures; see what they themselves tell you about eternal life.' They tell us that there is One in whom we may have life, and have it abundantly. They tell us that this Fountain of life is the Light of men, lighting every man. They bid us expect light directly from Him, the word of truth speaking without any medium to our hearts from Him, life in Him. They tell us of the Father who made mankind in his own image, breathing into our nostrils the breath of life, and who sent the Son of

Man to shew us what sonship to the invisible Father is, and to bring us all with Himself to that Father. They warn us that our true belief in Christ will depend upon the attitude of our hearts towards the Father, whether we are looking up to Him, or turning away from Him.

And what a test our Lord gives us of our spiritual state, of our likeliness to be real believers. Do you seek honour of men? or do you seek the honour that comes of God only? We know that there is such a thing as Duty. We know the names of Virtue and Devotion and Generosity and Purity, and of that which includes all and is the greatest of all, Love. Are these the things for which we care, to which our hearts surrender themselves? Or do we wish most to get on in the world, to have all men speak well of us, and many speak well *to* us,—to win the prizes which the world offers?

Remember, dear brethren, the comment upon these questions is not now,—The love of God is higher and better than the love of the world; or the steadfast obedience to duty answers better than the slavish pursuit of interest generally in the long run; or, the praise of men is transitory and unsatisfactory, the envy of men spiteful and vindictive. We are hearing a deeper lesson than these. We are taught that the love of the world, the

covetousness for men's praise, shuts out the love of the Father and the desire of His approbation; and that a man who does not admit the Father's love to abide in him nor send up the cry of thankfulness and obedience in answer to it, is incapable of knowing the Son, whom the Father loves and who loves and obeys the Father.

We are right to be anxious for the soundness of our creed:—our Lord does not appear to be indifferent how He is regarded by men. But whether men profess to honour the revelation given by God, and to be jealous for the observances appointed by God, He cares not at all. Rather, He is indignant and shocked at their Scripture-worship, if they have not the word of the Father abiding in them; if they will not come to Him, the Father's word, that they may have light and life; if they are so shut up in visible things and things temporal as to have no communion with things invisible and eternal.

Ye will not come unto me,—How often has the blessed Son of God to make this loving and yearning complaint?—that ye may have life! How would He gather us under His wings, if we would come and be safe there! How varied are the witnesses which He sends to speak to us of our unseen but glorious Lord, to testify against the usurpation of the visible things which make them-

selves lords over us! The vicissitudes of things, on the smaller and the greater scale, the lights that flash into our experience from an unseen world, the tokens of a Father's tenderness and a Father's chastisement, which none of us lack,—these are calling us away from trust in the world and from delight in the flatteries of men, to trust in the living God the Lord, and to delight in His voice that says, Well done, thou good and faithful servant. One of the greatest of these witnesses, one for our treatment of which we shall be held most responsible, is our sacred Book. If we only use it for complacency and for controversy, it will be worse than useless to us. If we search it till we see the nature of God shining upon us through its histories and prophecies, it will do us the blessed service of leading us above itself into the presence of the living God. To know God and Christ, by the power of the Spirit, this is what we are to look for by the reading of the Scriptures. If they help us to gain that knowledge, they will be the means of giving us life eternal, which stands in the knowledge of God. Christ must always be above the Bible. The Living Word of the Father must always be more than the dead letters. If we honour the Father and the Son, we shall be sure to prize the Scriptures. But we may nominally reverence the Bible, and

know nothing of God. We may be as proud Christians, as proud Protestants, as the Pharisees were proud sons of Abraham, and yet the Son of Man may be saying to us, Ye will not come to me that ye may have life. Brethren, let us hunger and thirst after true life and true knowledge and the approbation which is worth something. May God give us strength and discernment in the knowledge and obedience of Him, guarding us against temptation and the insidious confusions of a plausible world. May He fill us with a humble resolution to look to Him only as our Director and Rewarder, and make us happy in our present obedience, however difficult we may find it, and in our anticipations of the future, however undeserving we may be,—through the conviction that God is indeed the Father of the sons of men, and that in His Son Jesus Christ we have an eternal pledge of His love and good will towards us.

SERMON XVII.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

St Matthew V. 20.

"I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

IN every age there are sure to be representatives of the class that bore the title of "the Scribes and Pharisees." They will stand out more conspicuously in some periods than in others; there may easily be more hollowness and corruption amongst them at one time than at another. But they will never be wanting; they will always have their special characteristics, and their special dangers.

The Pharisees are brought before us in the Gospels as the 'religious class' of their day. The righteousness so often mentioned in connection with their name was a *class* righteousness.

The character of it is fully described to us: we are told what the outward professions of it were, and also what inward motives generally sustained the outside. Perhaps we too commonly assume that Pharisee *means* 'hypocrite,' because the Pharisees were for the most part great hypocrites. But a man might have been a Pharisee, in our Lord's time, and not have been a conscious hypocrite. St Paul, for example, was a distinguished Pharisee, but no one would say that he was then a hypocrite. He belonged to the religious class amongst his people, and many of that class were inwardly insincere and no better than actors. But all were not of this character; any one who was zealously religious was likely to belong to the class of Pharisees.

Terms used for describing classes will vary at different times. The Pharisees are never spoken of in the New Testament as 'religious'; but this seems to me to be the word which best denotes, to our ears, what they were amongst their countrymen. We should therefore find their representatives in those who, from whatever cause, are marked out by a stronger or fainter line, as more 'religious' than their neighbours. They may be sincere, or they may be impostors; but they will have much in common outside, which may warrant their being spoken of as the righteous

class, or by whatever name, 'religious' or other, corresponds to this.

In considering our own time, it is on the one hand impossible to mark out classes so definitely as may be done in history; and it is, on the other hand, most desirable to avoid putting our neighbours or ourselves into classes. We cannot do it accurately; and if we could it would be most mischievous. But we may observe the classes of other days, and consider what *tendencies* amongst ourselves are embodied in them. We may be sure there are such tendencies amongst us; and it is most profitable to study them as developed in former times and in the classes in which they were strongest. Let us assume then, brethren, that the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees may claim its disciples amongst ourselves; and let us learn how we ought to stand towards such righteousness.

Let us mark one or two features of the Pharisee righteousness. That which is brought out most conspicuously in the Gospels is the feeling of the Pharisees towards the *Sabbath-Day*. Upon this subject our Lord came most strongly into collision with them. His opposition to them on this point was what drove them into the final persecution which resulted in His death. The Pharisees were anxious for a very

strict observance of the Sabbath-Day. The Law of God enacted that work should not be done on the seventh day; and they wished to carry out the enactment scrupulously. They thought to do honour to God's law by the most rigorous observance of it which could be attained. Such an observance proved in many instances inconvenient, and was found burdensome. The Pharisees would of course maintain that man's inconvenience was not to be put against the word of God, and that the more men tried to bear a burden which God Himself put upon them, the more liberally they would be rewarded.

That devotion to the observance of the Sabbath-Day,—to the exclusion of *work* of every kind from the Day of Rest,—was the most prominent feature of the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Take one other. The name of Scribe and that of Lawyer,—both so often associated with the name of Pharisee,—indicate another object of Pharisaic zeal. The law of God, contained in the Scriptures, was magnified by them with peculiar reverence. It was their distinction to know the law. They held it an accursed thing to be ignorant of the law. They argued against Jesus out of the prophecies. They said boldly to Nicodemus when he asked that the common

justice of the law might be observed towards Jesus, "Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." The Scribe was the copyist of the Scriptures; the lawyer the commentator on the law. Probably the secular studies of most of the Pharisees in Judea were extremely limited; but we may be sure that any Pharisee would have counted it a shame not to be accurately instructed in the law and the prophets.

These then were two objects which the Pharisee, in his way, delighted to honour,—the Sabbath-Day and the Sacred Book. A great use of prayer is another characteristic specified in the Gospels. And along with these more specific features was a general *religiousness* of daily life, a disposition to set the direct requirements of God in the highest place, and to seek by minute fulfilment of them for a degree of God's favour not given to men in general.

These characteristics, dear brethren, are not so unfamiliar to ourselves, that we should think all teaching concerning the Pharisees alien to our circumstances and unsuited to our needs. To be more particular than others about the Sabbath-Day, to make much of the value and authority of the Bible, to separate oneself from the common life of the world by religious lines and barriers,

are as much the marks of a religious class amongst ourselves as they were in the Judea of our Lord's earthly life.

In that day there was a feeling amongst the mass of the people that the rules which the Pharisees enjoyed were a bondage too heavy to be borne. Our Lord described what the people felt, when He said, "They bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders." Though the Pharisees were men of such high authority, that their decrees were not openly questioned by the people, yet there was a sensation as of being *oppressed* by the system of observances which the Pharisees prescribed. There was a blind desire in the minds of the multitude,—a desire not clearly condemned by their conscience, nor yet expressly sanctioned by their conscience,—to get rid of the tyranny of the Pharisees, and to emerge into a state of freedom.

Now, when Jesus of Nazareth appeared openly amongst His countrymen, He undoubtedly spoke to this prevailing desire. He shewed that He was not cowed by the intimidation of the lawyers and Scribes and Pharisees,—that he knew how to estimate their pretensions, and was not afraid to denounce their conduct and their spirit. Here at once was something which attracted the multi-

tude. This was one token of a Deliverer come to help them. They had groaned inwardly under the spiritual burden of a vast religious system imposed upon them; and here was a good man who protested against that burden.

But this feeling of an escape out of bondage might have a double character. It might be the insurrection of a true spirit against a system which was merely dead and external, out of a longing for a better and higher life. Or it might be a rush out of restrictions which forbad much that was evil as well as pleasant into the freedom of looseness and indulgence. The former feeling was one which our Lord sought to cherish to the uttermost; the latter He was anxious to rebuke and discourage and to separate from the better spirit, like the chaff from the wheat.

And this wisdom of our blessed Lord's, brethren, is what I wish to bring to your notice this morning.

We have several indications in the Gospel history, that when the kingdom of heaven was proclaimed, numbers endeavoured to press into it from a mere dislike of law and a desire of lawless freedom. Men would say, 'We find after all, that the strictness of the Pharisees about the Sabbath-Day is an unnecessary burden. We may do what we please on the Sabbath-Day.

The injunctions of the law are not to be considered as so rigorously binding. We are not to be judged by our exact obedience to them. We are to be freemen and not slaves.' Our Lord met such reasonings with the sternest declarations. 'I am not come, as you fancy, to destroy the law and the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.' "Verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." It was true that Jesus, who proclaimed the forgiveness of sins and the setting up of the Kingdom of Heaven, into which little children and men like little children might enter, had no love for the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees: but what does he say about it, and about what He desired of His own disciples? *Thus* said He to His disciples, Except *your* righteousness shall *exceed* the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Here, surely, was an alarming and discouraging announcement. Men who knew themselves to be sinners and frail had fled to Jesus, as to One who offered them a deliverance from the obligations of a righteousness to which they felt themselves unequal: and He tells them that they cannot enter the kingdom which He has proclaimed,

unless they are *yet more* righteous than the religious men who seemed to them so over-righteous. At any rate there was no *laxity* here; no attempt to attract men by allowing them a greater measure of indulgence.

Of course, our blessed Lord took care to explain what he meant; what the righteousness was which He desired in His followers; how it was to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. The whole of this Sermon on the Mount was intended to expound *His* righteousness and to shew how it differed from the righteousness which was in vogue around Him.

We have already noticed some of the main characteristics of the Pharisaic righteousness. Its essence lay in this,—that it was a system of obedience to rules, for the sake of obtaining a selfish reward. It was natural that the rules should be multiplied; that efforts to keep them should be strained or affected; that the reward should be looked upon as bearing an external proportion,—so much to so much,—to the degree of observance attained. This whole doctrine, which is so plausible that it almost seems right and true to ourselves, is yet what the spirit of man will not bear, what the spirit of man was not made for. God is not a mere lawgiver who has enacted this or that, and set rewards and penalties against obedience

and transgression;—not *merely* that, though He has used this method of discipline with men. What He really is, our Lord came to declare. He declared at the same time what man is, and what man's righteousness must be.

Jesus taught, let us say first, that the only righteousness worth anything is the righteousness of the heart. It is not the doing of outward acts of obedience that is good in the sight of God, but the being inwardly righteous. But then, what, it might be asked, can *inward* righteousness be? Conformity to decrees and precepts is intelligible. But what is the meaning of a righteousness which is independent of such conformity? *This* is what it means,—it is a submission of man's will to God's will. The righteous man is he who gives up his nature,—his affections and his will,—to be in harmony with God's nature, with God's affections and will. This harmony is possible,—this founding of a man's being upon the Being of God, because man is a son of God, made in His image, made for the knowledge of God.

Let us try to see, dear brethren, how this was harder than the Pharisee righteousness; how nevertheless it offered the deliverance for which the human heart was longing.

(1) Almost every one would feel, instinctively, that a demand on the *spirit*, on the inward part,

is more exacting, more difficult to meet, than any demand on the outward obedience. So Naaman felt, in his simple way, when he wished the prophet had told him of some great thing to do, that he might have done it, and had not merely called for the sacrifice of his pride in the command, Wash and be clean. You have some desire working within, forbidden within; which is the easier command, to say, Thou shalt not touch the thing desired, or to say, Thou shalt be purged of the desire?—You have a quarrel with some brother;—which sounds easier, the command, Thou shalt not do him a wrong, but shalt be just and temperate in thy dealings with him, or the command, Thou shalt forgive him from thine heart? You feel that the majesty of God in heaven requires somewhat of you;—which is easier, the prescription of services indefinite, with which you may gratify that high majesty, or the simple dictate, Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God?

You will remember how the Lord Jesus Christ, in this chapter, distinguishes between outward and inward law; between the decrees which deal with the acts of men, and the call addressed to their spirits for submission and purification. Thou shalt not kill, is contrasted with Be reconciled to thy brother. Thou shalt not commit adultery, with Thou shalt not look upon a woman

to lust after her. The righteousness of the kingdom of heaven, which is to exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, is summed up in the solemn words, Be ye *perfect*, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

In that *perfection* lies the difficulty, what we might well call the impossibility, of Christian righteousness. Wherein lies the emancipation it offers?

(2) There are *two* kinds of chains under which the human spirit may groan. One bondage is that of rules demanding obedience. But there is another; and that is the bondage to our own will, to our own impulses. The Pharisees ingeniously combined the two. They sought to keep the will its own master, and they heaped up an ever-increasing burden of observances. They assumed man's natural independence of God, and yet thought men had a hard bargain to transact with God. Those who received with joy the announcement of a kingdom of heaven and pressed into it, were rising up against the bondage of rules; but they were not all aware of the deeper and the worse bondage. They wished to get out of slavery; but they had not learnt that the only freedom is in submission of the will to God. This therefore was our Lord's dearest teaching. He spoke of the Father in heaven, incessantly of the Father in heaven.

He spoke of Him as having the closest relations with the spirits which he had begotten, as looking into them, seeing them in secret, knowing their needs, ready beforehand to satisfy their wants, shewing the most wonderful care and goodness in His management of lilies and sparrows, but caring infinitely more for the children made in His own image. He declared His Father as good both to the just and to the unjust, as essentially a *forgiving* God, whose heavenly forgiveness was the only ground and fountain of human forgiveness. He announced that this loving and pardoning God was actually governing the world, leading events onwards, manifesting His kingdom, addressing a particular call, then and there when *He* spoke,—He whom God had sent,—to the sinful children who had not known Him, but whom He knew. Thus the Son of God attracted men to the righteousness which was so difficult. Thus He taught them, that it was not a righteousness they were to manufacture, but one which they were to receive. Thus he helped them to feel that what it was an impossibility to produce as a work, it might be the best of blessings and the only deliverance, to welcome as a gift.

The true Deliverer of men declared this doctrine concerning human righteousness: 'I proclaim deliverance to you from those prescriptions

which have been separated from their author—which have been divorced from the Living Word of God, and are therefore like a dead weight upon you, either fretting or benumbing the heart and conscience. But I do not tell you that you may do as you like. That would be binding a worse slavery upon you. I tell you that you may be delivered from the following of your impulses, from the making of your opinions, because you have a Father in heaven whom you may trust and follow, to whom you may commit yourselves, whose Will, absolutely unchanging and good, is a ground on which your wills may repose, in the strength of which they may work and act according to their nature and so be truly free. To know the Father, and become obedient, in faith and humility and love, to Him, is to have entered the kingdom of heaven. You must *stoop* to enter into that Society. The stiff neck must bend, because the kingdom is of the poor in spirit, of those who will be as little children. To such it is open; and it is the kingdom of peace and freedom and joy.'

There are those, my brethren, who have misread St Paul, and partly also the Sermon on the Mount, and have thought that while the Apostle was inculcating a technical theological fancy in his teaching about being justified by faith without works, Christ was proclaiming a broad and simple

human morality. They have made, "Not Paul, but Jesus," their maxim. But if Jesus was teaching as we have supposed, if He was shewing men that they had no righteousness in them apart from God's, and that they were to seek not some outward conformity, but the very perfection of their Father in heaven; if He made the highest attainment in righteousness consist in being "the children of your Father in heaven,"—then surely there is no variance between His teaching and that of the Apostle, who said that the only righteousness for men to put on was that of the Son of God, that when any man trusted in himself he was departing from the only righteousness. Our Lord taught the broadest and simplest human morality, true; but He deduced it all from the active and sustaining and generating Will of God. St Paul testified of the theological righteousness which is of faith only, true; but it was a righteousness which applied itself to every condition and exigency of human life, and could only put forth its nature in fulfilling and ennobling the universal human relations. In order that we may be true men, free men, we must know God and love God, because then God's image, which is man's perfection, will shew itself clearly in us; this is the teaching of Christ Himself, this is the teaching of every Apostle whom He sent forth.

Let us understand this then well, dear brethren, in its application to the difficulties and temptations of our own day. Let there be Pharisees in our world, though God forbid that we should judge our neighbours as pretenders or hypocrites. Let it be, that we may have felt half justified in protesting against a system of observances or traditions which may have seemed to us arbitrary, and have had no quickening effect upon us. Suppose that some have said, 'We do not go with those who are so particularly religious; we don't think people can be always reading their Bibles, or abstain on Sundays from every word or employment which is not strictly religious. We do not see so much harm in going to a play, or in some other things upon which religious persons frown.' Suppose all that, I say. What has the preacher of Jesus Christ to do in the matter? Certainly it is not his part to side with Pharisees, or to press any system of observances as chains upon the lives of men. He must not make himself an accomplice in any course of which the practical effect is to enslave any part of man's nature. But he must declare, and woe is to him if he does not, Except your righteousness, (not, *be* that,) but *exceed* that, of the Scribes and Pharisees, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. Certainly morality is more than religion; but mind that you *are* moral. See that

you forgive every brother in your heart and soul. See that every lawless lust be purged out of you. See that you be inwardly frank and simple and good. Will you find this *easier* than keeping a gloomy Sabbath-day? Will you find it easier than reading a daily chapter of the Bible? Will you find it easier than the giving up of certain amusements? It would be strange if you did. No, brethren; the commonest and most wholesome morality is that which is really the *hardest*, that in which we shall fail most egregiously, if we set about it as an easy matter to be done in our own strength. Let us rather think of honesty, purity, gentleness, as awful qualities which we cannot hope to secure for ourselves, but which God in heaven will give us, because they are His, and we are His offspring, and instead of casting us off, He has reconciled us to Himself in the Son of His Love. Let us set no other standard before us, but that of perfection; but let the perfection be that of discharging joyfully every appointed duty, of making fair and gracious, for our part, every relation in which we find ourselves placed. Let us be sure that such things are not secular, are not something apart from our business with God and the salvation of our souls, because the world with its mysteries is not the fruit of chance or the creation of an evil spirit, but the work of God Himself.

Let us look at the Son of Man as the Head of mankind and as the Son of God, and in Him let us draw near to our Creator,—in Him let us try to be faithful to the Divine purpose, and to do the good pleasure of the Father who loves us.

SERMON XVIII.

VISIBLE SIGNS OF INVISIBLE GRACE.

REVELATION XXI. 3.

"I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

WHEN Moses had received the Law from God upon Mount Sinai, and the covenant of God with the children of Israel had been firmly established and sealed with the blood of sacrifice, the Lord commanded them to make a Tabernacle, after instructions which He gave them. This is what is called the Tabernacle of the congregation, which occupies so conspicuous a place in the ordinances given to the children of Israel, and which was so important in their history. What was the meaning of this Tabernacle? The answer is given plainly in the book of Exodus. It was set up as the Lord's dwelling-place,—as a sign, that is, that

the Lord God was dwelling with the people. "Let them make me a sanctuary," said God, when He was directing the construction of the Tabernacle, "that I may dwell among them." To every Jew, therefore, the Tabernacle was a constant sign and witness of God's presence with His people. And the Presence indicated by the Tabernacle he was taught to regard as the great privilege and glory of his nation.

Naturally, therefore, we find in God's highest promises repeated assurances of this blessing. The prophets of the Old Covenant are continually bidden to renew the great announcement that God Himself would dwell with His people, and be their God. The same language, with the same image, is taken up in the New Testament. And the book of Revelation, which sets forth the glories of the kingdom which Christ had established amongst men, has no higher declaration than this, that God's tabernacle is with men, and that He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall dwell with them, and be their God.

I am bringing this truth before you this morning, dear brethren, in order to connect with it our own sacred ordinances, and especially the rite of Confirmation shortly to be celebrated amongst us. The highest view of those ordinances is to regard

them as institutions of the Kingdom of Heaven,—as signs and witnesses that the Lord God has His dwelling with men and is their God. But this view of them has been supplanted in a great measure by another view, which is more commonly received, and falls in more readily with our religious habits. This leaves out of consideration the fact that any Kingdom of Christ or of Heaven has been set up, and that God has come down to dwell with men. It assumes that God is in Heaven, and men upon earth, but that men may seek after God, and that it is good for them to endeavour to please Him. It regards sacred ordinances primarily as means of human improvement, and as opportunities for making special efforts to please God. It fixes the eye upon what *men* do in any sacred ordinance, and considers that as moulding and interpreting the entire ordinance.

I am anxious that we should all see clearly what difference in our conception of our Church ordinances is caused by our taking the one view or the other; and I will therefore endeavour to set each of the Sacraments and Confirmation in the light first of one view and then of the other.

To begin with Baptism. The more common feeling about this Sacrament is to regard it as a confession of faith on the part of the baptized person, made for himself by an adult, and for an

infant by the sponsors. The baptism of infants is represented as an offering or dedication of them by the parents and sponsors to the service of God. A grown person coming to be baptized is supposed to give such assurances as justify his being accepted into the communion of the Church.

But if we think *first* of God's kingdom or tabernacle being set up amongst us, the office of Baptism will be to bear witness of that kingdom and Presence. We shall see, in it, God claiming the baptized as His own, washing them with water for the remission of sins, putting His name upon them, declaring them to be His children, members of His Son, subjects of His Spirit. This Sacrament then becomes truly a Divine ordinance, not a human convention. And, as you cannot fail to see, this is what Baptism itself, as Christ instituted it, and as it is administered in our Church, declares its own meaning to be. It is "God's holy baptism," and the substance of its form is that the priest washes with water, saying, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The act of the baptized person, if we keep to the strictly sacramental part of the ordinance, is nothing more than submitting to that washing in the threefold name. What is brought before us is God's grace acting by a sign. Confessions and resolutions, like those

in our office, may be most appropriate and instructive for those who are baptized and those who are spectators of the ceremony; but these form no part of the sacrament, and therefore instead of over-riding it, they should be kept in a strictly subordinate place.

Take now the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. If we follow the commonest manner of regarding it, we shall think almost exclusively of our own part or share in it. We shall consider it as a peculiarly solemn act of profession and prayer. We shall assume that the virtue of it must reside in the state of our own minds as we come to the Lord's table, and will depend upon the degree of devotion which under the influence of solemn and awe-inspiring associations we may succeed in experiencing. Its influence upon our conduct will be derived from reflections like these,—'I have professed myself, or I am about to profess myself, one of the smaller and more responsible body of Christians within the larger circle of the Church. I am bound to take care that my actions are not unworthy of that profession. I am bound to strive, when I make the profession, that my feelings may be in harmony with it.' Of course also there may be other reflections to this effect:—'I have no inclination to claim a place in that inner circle. I do not wish to incur the responsibilities it involves.

My conduct is not likely to be that of a specially religious person. I would rather be judged as one not making a profession of religion. It will be safer for me, at any rate for the present, to stay away from the Sacrament of the Lord's table. Or, if I attend at all, it is more probable that at rare intervals I may be able to bring my feelings by special efforts into harmony with the occasion, than if I were to partake of the Holy Communion as often as it is administered.'

The remembrance of the tabernacle of God amongst men will awaken a different class of thoughts. We shall be led to think of the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ as a sign that God Himself feeds men with his own nature. We shall see God testifying to us that Christ may dwell in us, and we in Christ. We shall look on the distribution of the bread and wine which are the symbols of the body and blood of Christ as a token that the very substance of the Son of God is imparted to us, so that we may be one with Him and He one with us. Our own part, again, is to receive. "Take, eat, this is my body;" "Drink ye all of this, this is my blood;" —*there* is the Sacrament. Our part in it is to receive what God gives. His grace is manifesting itself to us through an outward sign, and we are simply invited to receive the grace of God. This

Sacrament becomes thus a very powerful witness of the presence of God with us. It represents the Son of God as incorporating us into one body in Himself. It speaks of the very closest union with God which our faculties enable us to apprehend.

There is no question that the Church prescribes very solemn confessions and resolutions as proper to the occasion in which we receive the grace of God in this way. But then these confessions and resolutions are not arbitrary. They are not the highest effort of the Church to conceive and express what is proper for the most religious persons. They are simply dependent on the meaning of the Sacrament. If God comes down to be with us and binds us to Himself in the closest spiritual fellowship,—if our energies, hopes, and enjoyments, so far as they are pure, are continually ministered to us by God Himself,—it is taken for granted that we must repent, in much self-abasement, of our sins against God, that we must submit ourselves to the inspiration which prompts us to lead new lives. A disinclination to join in this Sacrament, if it is an authentic sign of a living Divine Kingdom into which we are called, cannot be merely a reasonable desire not to take upon ourselves a higher class of responsibilities. Those who come to the Sacrament are not proclaiming that they wished to be judged by a voluntary

standard, which is higher than the common standard of their neighbours' lives. If the symbolism of the Sacrament has any truth in it, it proclaims a fact which applies to those who do not actually eat the bread and drink the wine as much as to those who do. Every time it is administered, it calls upon every one who is aware of it to ask himself whether it is true that men are invited, universally, to be partakers of the Divine nature.

There is a very decided difference between the two Sacraments and the ordinance of Confirmation. As regards authority, the two forms which are recorded in the Gospels to have been expressly enjoined upon His followers by the Lord Jesus Himself, must take distinct precedence of all others. These are the great positive institutions of the kingdom of Christ. By these we are to learn and to define the essential nature of that kingdom. The traditional ordinance of Confirmation takes a place below these. But it also may be regarded from the two different points of view from which we have been regarding the Sacraments. It may be recognized as a sign that the kingdom and tabernacle of God are amongst men, or it may be looked upon primarily as a beneficial stimulus and a good available bond of obligation, to a religious life.

According to the latter view, it is an occasion

for bringing young persons together to take upon themselves the Christian profession, and to make a solemn vow of devotion to the service of God. It is expected that those who have been confirmed should think very solemnly of the new obligations under which they have placed themselves; that they should bear in mind how publicly they are pledged before God and men; that these recollections, acting upon the sense of consistency and good faith, should help in securing them against the power of temptation, and in binding them to a Christian and virtuous life. As Baptism is one profession made on entering the Christian communion, and the Lord's Supper another profession made from time to time by those who are religiously anxious to be true Christians, so Confirmation is also a profession, made in a third way, once for all, at a peculiarly interesting age. The baptism of infants is a profession made not *by* them, but *for* them. But the Holy Communion and Confirmation are both voluntary, and every person who is invited to either does rightly in weighing the reasons against as well as for. It is not unreasonable therefore that when that theory of Confirmation which I have just set forth is presented to young persons, they should ask themselves, 'Is it worth my while to subject myself to responsibilities of my own choosing? Is it not safer for

me to make no profession? I am just as likely to be a good Christian without it, and if I fail, I shall not, according to the theory, be so severely judged.' Moreover, to come forward and make a voluntary profession must be distasteful to true modesty and humility, as well as to the carnal nature which shrinks from the service of God.

But let us recall to mind once more the Kingdom of Christ and the tabernacle of God, and see what Confirmation, in its own appointed form, professes to be. We have observed that the view which resolves all ordinances into avowals and efforts on the part of those who have a share in them, is likely to leave out of consideration that which is specially characteristic in each. It hardly thinks of the washing with water in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; or of the presenting of the bread and wine as the body and blood of the Saviour. Similarly it omits to bring forward the laying on of the Bishop's hands in Confirmation. But this is what constitutes the rite of Confirmation. It is the Bishop who confirms; the candidates *are* confirmed. And what is the meaning of his laying his hands on their heads? We can have no better authority than the words of our own office. In that the Bishop is made to interpret himself what he has done. He says in a prayer to Almighty God which follows the act of

Confirmation, "We make our humble supplications unto Thee for these Thy servants, upon whom (after the example of Thy holy Apostles) we have now laid our hands, to certify them, by this sign, of Thy favour and gracious goodness towards them. Let Thy Fatherly hand, we beseech Thee, ever be over them; let Thy Holy Spirit ever be with them." These are plain words. To lay the hand on the head is an act of fatherly blessing, a token of goodwill. It has been the custom for bishops, from the time of the Apostles downwards, to lay their hands on the heads of those brought to them after baptism, in token of the Divine blessing upon them, and to claim them as children of the Lord Almighty. The Church has held that such an act might be taken as certifying those who submitted to it of God's favour and gracious goodness towards them, and of the help to be rendered by the Spirit of God to every effort to live according to God's will.

Manifestly therefore Confirmation, if it is anything at all, is another witness of the Kingdom of Heaven, another token that God has set up His Tabernacle with men and dwells with them. It speaks of God's grace in relation to a special want and exigency in human life. It represents Him as owning, in the character of his sons and daughters, those who are come to years of discretion, and who

have to bear on their own shoulders the burden of life.

We should be inclined to conclude at once that Confirmation or the Laying on of Hands was a natural sequel to Infant Baptism. We might suppose that if it was the custom in the Church to baptize persons on coming to years of discretion, the Laying on of Hands would be absorbed into Baptism. But this is not quite true. No doubt, one great element of the value of Confirmation as a witness of the Kingdom of Christ would be lost. But we read in the Acts of the Apostles that after grown persons were baptized in Samaria, the Apostles Peter and John went to them to lay hands on them. And if we baptize young persons as adults, when their baptism has been omitted in infancy, so that they have had no vows made for them by godfathers and godmothers, we present them none the less to the Bishop, that he may lay his hands upon them. It is reasonable to consider, therefore, whether there is not something in the Bishop's office which gives significance to the laying on of hands. I do not speak of any magical virtue issuing from the person of a Bishop. But, if his office is one appointed in the Kingdom of Christ, it must have some significance. It cannot be merely a place of promotion and dignity,—it must set forth some aspect of God's government over

men. It is easily seen and acknowledged that if the Episcopal character indicates anything more than a step in rank, it represents the idea of Fatherhood over the Church. The Offices in our Prayer-book exhibit to us two distinct acts performed by a Bishop alone,—the Ordination of Priests and Deacons, and Confirmation. Now in both these the outward sign is the laying on of hands,—the act of a father blessing a son. And you would find that the Offices for Ordination both begin with an address to the Bishop, in which he is called "Reverend Father in God." It is in accordance with this view of the Episcopal character, that when the Bishop of Rome put forth the claim of a pastorate over the whole Church, he assumed the name of the Holy Father, and the very title of Pope which he now usually bears, means 'father.' Our ancestors denied that any man was called to the office of Father over the whole Church, because they held that God Himself was a present and not an absent Father, as they held that Christ being actual ruler over the Church, required no Vicegerent to act for him. But they did not deny that in the different subdivisions of the Church throughout the world there might be persons bearing a fatherly name, and called to a fatherly office, who would not exclude God's own fatherhood or make it seem more distant, but would be perpetual

witnesses of the family nature of the whole Church, and therefore of its true unity, and would keep men in mind of the one universal invisible Father. Practically, it has been always felt that Bishops are the most effectual representatives of the visible unity of the Catholic Church throughout the world; and we may be pretty sure that a sense of the real Catholicity of the Church, and a sense of the worth of the Episcopal office, would grow together in the Christian mind.

For the present, we must confess it, thoughts concerning the unity of the Church Catholic seem but speculative and visionary to us. But we are at least practically concerned in understanding rightly the ordinances which are in actual use and administration amongst us; and I have been endeavouring to shew that the truth of the living kingdom and presence of God amongst us is the key to the right understanding of the Sacraments, and of all other sacred ordinances. The links which unite them severally to the Kingdom of Christ are their Sacramental forms,—that is, the outward visible *signs* which represent God's *grace* in its various aspects and influences towards us. To be confirmed then, let me repeat, is to be certified that God's tabernacle is with us, and that He is dwelling amongst us and is our God, through the laying on of the hands of him who

has been called to be Bishop or Church Father over us.

But before I conclude, I ought to guard against being supposed to say, that there is no truth in that view which looks at the human confession and the human resolution in our sacred ordinances. The idea of 'profession' and 'professors' of religion has become so mischievously dominant amongst us, that it is worth while to run some risk of misconstruction in endeavouring to put it down into its right place. But, that we are all called upon to avow our faith courageously and to strive with all our might to act up to it, is what every Christian must feel strongly. Only we shall be more likely to do it in the right spirit, and we shall have great help in doing it, if we come to God in the deep persuasion that He is seeking us. Let us believe that we are surrounded with tokens of God's presence and goodness, that His mercy encompasses us on every side, and that we are met continually by distinct interpreters of that vocation wherewith God has called us;—and we shall surely feel some new shame for receiving the grace of God so much in vain, some new hope that even a feeble effort on our part to give ourselves up to God will be sustained by His great strength and made effectual. Instead of

saying, Come, brethren, let us see whether by some special effort, by some novel contrivance perhaps of prayer and profession, we may not find God,—I am appointed to say, Brethren, God is seeking and calling you. He has redeemed you out of ignorance and a servile following of your own impulses by the precious blood of His dear Son. Look, He has founded a Church to represent the spiritual Home which He has Himself prepared for you. He has instituted visible witnesses which speak to every generation of the privileges and laws of the Divine Home. Every such witness is a protest against the lawless wandering life which your nature prompts you to lead. It bids you acquiesce, to your eternal advantage, in the fellowship of Christ your Lord and of your brethren His members. God has given you a power to renounce the claims of the world, the flesh, and the devil over your obedience, by clinging to Him and the Fatherly help and inspiration which He has bestowed upon you. He gives you power to renounce a separate self-seeking life through the receiving of the common life which has its fountain in Jesus Christ. He invites you to undertake the responsibilities of grown-up life not in your own strength or wisdom, which are but weakness and folly, but in dependence on Him

as a guide and strengthener. He offers to confirm you with the wisdom and energy of His own blessed Spirit. He has given us ordinances of public worship and ministry, that we may go to meet Him as one who first pardons, reconciles, and seeks us. In the presence of all these institutions, we should surely live in the reverence and awe which Jacob felt when he had seen a ladder set up on the earth and with its top reaching to heaven, and angels of God ascending and descending upon it. It is for us also to say, Surely the Lord is in this place, though perhaps we knew it not. Such a consciousness, you may depend upon it, would not breed a listless, passive spirit. It would be effectual to deliver us from listlessness and idleness. No human beings have been so courageous and resolute, so zealous and hopeful, as those who felt most deeply that every thing was of God, the call and the power to respond to it. The conviction that God's work was not dependent upon their efforts, did not quench those efforts, but enabled them to put them forth calmly and vigorously. God grant, dear brethren, that it may be so with us, and especially with the younger members of our body. Let the prayers of the congregation be sincere and hearty for those whom God is leading up through the

dangers of youth to the tasks of manhood and womanhood. May it be a source of hope and strength to us all, that we are gathered, young and old, around a Divine Tabernacle, and that no guidance, of fire by night or cloud by day, shall be wanting to those who will walk by it.

SERMON XIX.

CREATION BY THE WORD.

COLOSSIANS I. 16, 17.

"For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."

THE first chapter of Genesis is given us as a proper Lesson for this day. Our text, speaking of the Son, who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature, is the best comment on the selection of that chapter for Trinity Sunday.

I wish therefore to speak this morning, brethren, of creation. It is a very difficult subject; and I can only hope that, by God's help, I may suggest some thoughts which may guard us from settling down into unworthy and false notions about

creation, and may lead us to look at this subject from the right point of view.

Every one must feel, I think, that such words as these of St Paul's, which I have just read, suggest a view of the universe and of existence with which we are not familiar. The main point of them is their connecting creation so absolutely with the Son of God. The expressions denoting this connection are more varied and more forcible in the original than in our English Version. "*In* Him," St Paul says, all things were created. "*Through* Him," or by His means, "And *unto* Him," have all things been created. All things in Him *consist*, or are held together. Such language must mean something. It does not appear to say that 'the Eternal Father, instead of creating the world Himself, as He might have done, employed His Son in the work, as a watchmaker might employ his son to make a watch.' It does not refer to the past only, but to the present, and even the future. It does not take creation out of the hands of the Father; it implies that God made all things *through* or *by* the Son, and it agrees with what St John says, that by the Word all things were made, and without Him was not anything made that was made. It follows plainly, I think, from the teaching of St Paul and St John, that when we are thinking of the world, of the

laws and reason and purpose of its existence, every aspect of it should bear witness to us of a Divine Being, and that we should not be able to account for anything without God.

We will return presently to that reverent perception of a Divine order and life in creation which these Apostles would awaken in us. Let me allude first to the opposite habit, of regarding creation apart from God.

There are very few who suppose that the world *came into being* of itself. But it is a much more possible and common notion that it *goes on* of itself. There is such a thing as a 'mechanical' conception of the created universe. We may imagine, to borrow a striking figure, that the world was put together, like a clock, some thousands of years back, and that the maker, having wound it up, sits apart, seeing it *go*. There is much, no doubt, to make such a view plausible. We observe a natural sequence in things, cause producing effect which in its turn becomes a cause, and we may say, 'What more is wanted?' How things *began* may require explanation: but having once begun, they evidently possess an internal power of self-development; and as all the present has grown by fixed laws out of the past, so all the future is contained in, and cannot but grow out of, the present. Such a theory of the universe, if it goes so far as

to *deny* God, cannot of course be held by Christians. But if it contents itself with forgetting God and leaving Him out of account, it may be held by Christians with extreme facility. The Biblical history of creation, let me especially remark, has been made to support this view. It has been understood to say that some six thousand years ago God was occupied for a fixed period in making the world, and then rested from His labours, and has left the natural universe to itself ever since. It may be allowed that God has from time to time interfered in the regular course of things, but the regular course of things itself is supposed to be the result, even according to the Bible, of some *temporary action* on the part of God, which took place *at a certain date*.

We are not allowed however to hold this view of the universe, as being at the present time separate from God, without disturbance. Let me name certain influences which conspire to drive us out of it.

1. First, there is the recent science of Geology. So far from regarding the discoveries of Geology as hostile to a true belief concerning God and creation, they appear to me to have had at least a very powerful effect in expelling a *false* belief. Christian people were lazily assuming that God turned this universe out of hand 6000 years

ago by a brief creative effort,—when the observation of thinking men was drawn to the earth's crust, and they discovered indubitable signs of its having existed for countless thousands of years, and having borne upon its surface a succession of graduated systems of organized life. The immediate result of this discovery was that the lazy assumption which shut God out of His universe, was disturbed and by degrees shaken to the ground. Geological discoveries contained a precious revelation of Divine order in a continuous work of creation, which brought men more decidedly to the alternative of either seeing God *in all His works*, or *denying* Him altogether. It led them to look more intelligently and more humbly into the actual laws of things, and to wish to be taught rather than to dogmatize.

2. Philosophical reflection has done yet more to render the godless notion untenable. The conceptions of the human mind as to *a beginning of things*, at a certain date, whether known or unknown, are shewn to be utterly baffled and confounded. It has been said, Let any man try his best to conceive of all things as not existing, and then as coming into being, and he will find the conception impossible to his understanding. The human mind discovers itself to be in a singular dilemma; it can neither conceive of the universe

as beginning to exist, nor yet as *not* beginning to exist. I refer to this metaphysical dilemma, because a very similar difficulty in the external world has been brilliantly illustrated in a recent contribution to the controversy respecting the Mosaic account of creation[1]. When geologists have pointed to the proofs of the earth's antiquity in the remains of extinct life which they have scientifically observed, the question has secretly occurred to many, May not these strata have been created 6000 years ago exactly as we find them, the coal lying in its veins *as if* huge forests had formerly flourished, the saurians and the mammoths coming into being for the first time as skeletons and never having *lived* at all? People have been withheld from asking this question by a sense of the unsatisfactoriness of such a theory; but a popular writer on natural history has recently put this question boldly, in support of the Biblical narrative as understood to affirm that this world came into being 6000 years ago; and he has fortified the supposition by the following argument. He bids us imagine any one of the existing forms of life coming into being. Let it be a tree. If you conceive a tree to be produced full-grown, in its present nature, you might argue, from what you see in the tree itself on the day of its creation,

[1] Mr Gosse's *Omphalos*.

that it had existed for a certain number of years, as for example from the concentric rings of the trunk which you observe when it is sawn across: if you conceive an animal created full grown, you might argue conclusively from its hair, its teeth, its tissues, that it had been growing for some years. If you choose to imagine a seed created, instead of a full-grown tree, still the seed tells you of a parent tree; the youngest animal implies a parent animal. You cannot possibly imagine, therefore, any part of the organized world brought into existence, without a long *previous* existence being, to all appearance, demonstrably *implied*. Mr Gosse argues upon this that there is nothing more unreasonable in supposing the whole earth brought into being with the most convincing tokens of an indefinite previous existence ready-made, than in imagining the creation of any living thing whatsoever. If a flower is created which never was a bud, why should not a whole stratum-full of animal forms which never lived or moved be similarly produced?

It appears to me, brethren, that this argument, instead of being satisfactory or shewing the way to a solution of our difficulties, only confounds in the most decisive manner our attempts to imagine an actual beginning of visible existence. We may take it as a hint that such a conception is

not within the range of our mental faculties, and that God has made us no revelation which settles that particular point, of the mode in which things came into being at any definite time. It is a hint that creation is for us taken out of chronology, and that our true business with the work of creation is not even approximately to assign a date of commencement. Accordingly this representation of the subject is another disturbance of that apparently easy notion which has claimed the Bible in its support.

3. I may mention as another disturbing influence, the truer estimate of what we call "matter," which various causes have promoted. Natural philosophers, as well as poets and artists, have found the most solid matter all but disappear under their touch or their scrutiny. These bodies of ours,—our flesh and blood,—do not contain a single particle of the matter which they contained ten years ago. In everything you are compelled to look through the surface till you find living *forces*, rather than particles. It is spiritual force which upholds and fashions the world and every part of it. When you want to know what things actually are, and why they are what they are, you cannot stop short of invisible plans and energies. That which we see depends entirely upon what we do *not* see.

This view withdraws our thoughts from the contemplation of a certain bulk of matter brought into being at such a time and then left to itself. It obliges us to think of the life and the meaning which are at the heart of things, and which are *creating now* as much as ever. We learn to think of creation as continuous,—not as the *result* of a Divine act, but as itself a progressive and permanent Divine act. We see that the question for us is, not how things assumed certain shapes and began certain activities at a certain time, but how the order of nature is *now* held together and vivified; not what the Creator had once to do with the sun and the planets, but what He has *now* to do with them. The creation which we have to understand is that which goes on when any man is born or dies, when the sun rises and brings the day to us, when he sets and the night covers the earth with her mantle.

4. Thus has the notion been disturbed which men *assumed*, as I said, to be proclaimed by Divine authority in the book of Genesis. They have thought that by some modification on one side or the other, the Bible had to be brought into harmony with science. But there was a question which might have been considered previously,—whether the Bible narrative was in

harmony with itself? I pass over difficulties which are familiar to most readers, such as the creation of day and night on the first day, while the sun and moon are put off till the fourth. There is a more important and more instructive discrepancy between the first chapter of Genesis and the second. We are told that in the six days the heavens and earth and all the host of them were finished, and on the seventh God rested from all His work which He had created and made. Then (ii. 4) we read, "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground." Then the narrative goes on to speak of the fashioning of the first man Adam, of his being placed in the garden, of every beast of the field and every fowl of the air being formed out of the ground, and brought to Adam to name, and then of the making of the first woman. There is so manifest a difference, upon the face of it, between this narrative and the account in

the first chapter, that all commentators who do not accept the authority of holy Scripture say at once, 'There are obviously two distinct traditions here. The compiler of the book has put them both in, without regard to their consistency.'

But I believe we may find, by the careful consideration of these chapters, that though the two accounts are very different, they are not contradictory, and that the difference is explained in the book itself.

It has always been the opinion of some of the best expounders of the Book of Genesis, that in the account of the seven days, we have,—not a narrative of the way in which things came into material and visible existence,—but a statement of that creative act in the mind and will of God which not only preceded the visible development of things, but which always underlies and supports and explains that development. According to this view, in the seven days, we have *the account of an order*, and not *a piece of chronology*. Expressions taken from time are used, because it is impossible to speak of any work of God without the help of such expressions; just as in attempting to set forth the *eternal* generation of the Son, we speak of His being begotten *before* the worlds. But to shew that this *Time-*

language is only a help to us to understand that which is properly *above* Time, and is not itself the final statement about creation, we have various inconsistencies which break into the account as a history, and make such a view of it quite untenable. We are told, as you saw, that the seven days' statement is an account of the generations of the heavens and of the earth, "in *the day* that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, and the plants *before* they were in the earth, and the herbs *before* they grew." This seems to be about as definite an assertion as could be made that the preceding account had been a description of the universe as coming forth from the mind of God, and not as appearing bit by bit in its visible development. Then on looking back to the respective days, we find ourselves told that '*kinds*' were then created, which is a remarkable feature. Of man it is said, "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them." There is nothing here about Adam, but about the race or species of man, with the two sexes. And on the same day God bids man be fruitful and multiply and exercise his human prerogatives in the midst of the creation.

Consider, too, the final blessing of all that

God had made, at the end of the sixth day. According to the common modern view, the approbation of the Creator is recorded only for what was most rudimentary and unfinished, as a matter of fact, in His creative work; we have no blessing upon the great works of cultivation, none upon the cities and countries of men. Our lesson about the relation of Almighty God, as the Creator, to this universe in which we live, is reduced to this, — that before the things which we most admire came into being, God pronounced the mere unfilled outline of creation very good. As to the rest of God, on the seventh day, we cannot be meant to understand that for six days God undertook unusual labours, that on the seventh He rested, and after that, began working again without intermission of day or night, of sabbath or working-day, as our blessed Lord says His Father did and does work, to the present time and to endless ages. The view which I am commending to you, removes this difficulty, though it certainly does not get rid of mystery: for according to it, we are taught that there is some incomprehensible relation between activity and rest in the nature of God Himself, of which our nature is declared to be the image, and that the creation, according to God's purpose and work in it, unmarred, that is, by sin, is still,

as it always was, very good, and still satisfies its Maker.

Let me put before you then, brethren, in a brief and summary way, what the first two chapters of Genesis appear, on their own shewing, to teach us. We have first of all the existing universe of things accounted for. It is not itself a Divine Being, but it is an orderly work of *the* Divine Being, its form impressed upon it by God's immediate action, its energies flowing from the Spirit of God. The sacred writer analyses the world, as it were, with reference on the one hand to God, and on the other to man. The world is divided into parts and degrees by the figure of successive days; the work of each day comprehends that which *was to be*, as well as that which at any time was; and the crown of creation is mankind, male and female, made in the image of God. The acquiescence of God in this His work is set forth by the figure of a seventh day on which He is said to have rested.

A plain reader of this account, reading it in the very simplest manner, would receive the right impression from it if his mind was set upon the substantial realities of it, and not upon the dates. Though he might not gather from it all that a fuller study would teach him, he would be impressed by the fact of a Divine order and a Divine

life in the world about him; and he would learn to regard the universe with the deepest awe, but without fear or superstition. Another reader, looking more closely into the sacred record, would notice the impossibility of viewing it as a narrative of temporary action. He would see the writer himself marking the change when he comes to speak of simple history. First "God," by His Word and His Spirit, creates the Universe with its laws and powers before these laws and powers are developed. Then "the Lord God," (ii. 4)—the name being changed,—waters the face of the ground, forms a man of the dust, and breathes into him the breath of life. For this man the Lord God plants a garden and causes trees and fruits to grow, forms beasts and fowls, and finally makes a woman and brings her to the man. This history does not contradict the former statement if we take *that* to refer to the invisible, and *this* to the visible, *that* to the productive designs of God, *this* to the gradual realization of those designs at one time and in one place.

This interpretation of the commencement of the book of Genesis, though not, as I have said, a novel one, has been discredited as being mystical or fanciful. It is quite right that we should be on our guard against mystical or fanciful interpretations; but let us also be careful how we reject

any view upon such a charge. I am not asking you to take the first chapter of Genesis as an allegory. There is only one qualification by which I should desire to modify the simplest and most literal acceptance of it; and that is, that we should understand the succession of days as a convenient and even necessary expedient for representing to us a Divine or Eternal order. Undoubtedly we are required in this case to connect the progressive development of creation immediately at every moment with the Word and Spirit of God; but is not this just what we are called upon to do both as observers of nature, and as believers in the New Testament? Knowing what we do about the physical universe, and knowing also what St Paul and St John have taught as to the constitution of all things, physical as well as spiritual, earthly as well as heavenly, in the Word or Son of God, should we not expect the sacred volume, when it tells us of the first placing of a man upon this earth, to give us also a simple but profound statement of what the world which we see about us is in relation to God and to men?

I would say then, brethren, that we are reminded on this day, of the witness which God bears concerning Himself in the wonderful system of things which we behold in life and motion around us. Why are "the invisible things of

God clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His Eternal Power and Godhead"? Not, surely, because men might guess that it would take a God to bring a universe out of nothing; but because He is day by day revealing Himself in the beauty and glory and wisdom and tenderness of the outer world. Of one alive to that revelation it has been said, "Heaven lies over him wheresoever he goes or stands on the Earth; making all the Earth a mystic temple to him, the Earth's business all a kind of worship." Who indeed can look into the processes of nature with a humble and reverent eye, and not discern infinite wisdom and infinite love alive and working in them? That we do not enjoy this discernment as we ought, and that we blind ourselves to God in His creation, is not the complaint of religious teachers only, but of poets and artists. There is no topic which has called forth more glowing eloquence in verse and prose, than that of men's insensibility to the presence of the living God in the universe. One of our greatest poets, with a noble indignation, thus accounts for our insensibility:—

> "The world is too much with us; late and soon
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
> Little we see in Nature that is ours,
> We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!"

The task of ministers of Christ is not so much to expatiate upon the splendour of the grass and glory of the flower, as to testify that the splendour and the glory belong to Him who gave Himself up a sacrifice for men. A mere sentimental admiration of the beauty of nature, or a cold appreciation of the wisdom which is unfolded in its laws, may make the outer world a barrier between the human soul and God, rather than a garment by which it may see Him. The Gospel teaches us to meditate on the mystery and the majesty of the Word in whom all things were made, and not to forget or put aside the amazing revelation of the nature of God, which is given us in the Word made flesh. As unbelievers may miss the awfulness and the loveliness of the creation because they do not think of Him who is the Life of Creation and who is Love, so the Christian may detract from the glory of his Master, and may take one of His crowns from His head, if he does not believe and remember that He who died and rose again is the Eternal Creator of the Universe, the Head of all dominions and principalities and powers, whether in heaven or in earth.

Those powers, therefore, which we see most continually at work around us,—those, I mean, which are exerted in the course of nature and in the life of human societies,—we must learn to

associate, as directly as we can, with the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, with the Word who was made flesh, and with the Holy Ghost the Comforter. We must believe that it is the Spirit of God whose breath is between this varied picture of things which we behold and the dark formless void. We must believe that the laws, according to which the planets roll over our heads and the grass grows beneath our feet, are gathered up in Him who is the wisdom and the mind of God. We must believe that there is no power or existence whatsoever which does not depend on the Absolute God and Father, which is not designed to set forth His glory.

And let us be sure that every recognition of God's infinite glory, every outburst of the spirit of praise in our hearts, will make us ashamed of our own sinfulness, and anxious to be forgiven. This is the practical result which should follow from all contemplation, and which must follow from the real discovery of God. The Te Deum is the truest as well as the most glorious of utterances for a Trinity Sunday. It expresses for the voice of the Church which Christ has redeemed the spirit and feelings of the prophet who was looking forward to the manifestation of Christ. Isaiah was permitted to see the Lord sitting upon a throne, and the seraphims covering their faces with wings be-

fore Him: and of these seraphims one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory. And the confession was then forced from the prophet, Woe is me! for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. But no sooner had he uttered the confession than the live coal was taken from the altar and placed on his mouth, and his iniquity was purged. And then, in answer to the Lord's voice, asking Whom shall I send and who will go for us? the prophet answered, Here am I, send me. Brethren, what a wonderful lesson for us there is in this revelation! Can we follow the prophet at any distance in his experiences? Do we know at all what it is to catch a glimpse of the greatness of the One God, and to see heaven and earth full of the majesty of His glory? Then, surely, in our awe of God's unapproachable holiness and in the sense of our own nothingness and our vileness, we shall cling to the Cross on which that Love was manifested, which, for the deliverance of our race, did not abhor the Virgin's womb: then we shall beseech Him to help His servants who redeemed them with His own blood. Then we shall know that we can only hope to avoid sin, if the Lord will vouchsafe by His Spirit to keep

us from it; and with utter distrust of ourselves, but with an adoring confidence in Him who cares for us, we shall commit ourselves to Him in saying, O Lord, let Thy mercy lighten upon us, as our trust is in Thee; O Lord, in Thee have I trusted, let me never be confounded.

SERMON XX.

THE SABBATH-DAY AND ITS OBSERVANCE.

St John XX. 19, 20.

"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He shewed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord."

THIS first day of the week was the day of our Lord's Resurrection, that which we commemorate on Easter Sunday. On the first day of the next week, as it might be on this day[1], Jesus paid a similar visit to the disciples. On both these occasions, St John tells us, our Lord came and stood in the midst, and said, *Peace be unto you.* This salutation therefore, though not peculiar to those occasions, may reasonably be connected in our minds with our Lord's first appearances after His Resurrection. Our keeping

[1] The first Sunday after Easter.

of Sunday may have this memory associated with it, that on the first two days to which we should trace up the long series of Christian Sundays, the Lord whom we worship stood in the midst of the assembled disciples, and said, Peace be unto you.

These words are in the closest harmony with the effect which we are taught to ascribe to the Resurrection. Christ rose again for our justification. Beholding Jesus Christ raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, we see ourselves accepted of God, set in our right position before God as sons reconciled to a Father that they may live a life of trust and fellowship. The risen Christ is the living Mediator between God and men, in whom God is at peace with men, and men at peace with God. In Him the Father is perfectly pleased and satisfied; in Him mankind is complete. God's rest and man's rest meet in Him. For if we may speak of God as resting in the satisfaction with which He regards the creation of His hands, we may speak of Him more strongly as resting in the Head of all creation, His only-begotten Son. And it is He who gives rest to the disquieted spirit of man, agitated by guilt and weary with wandering.

Gradually and almost imperceptibly, through a partial observation of both days, the Jewish

Sabbath of the last day of the week passed into the Christian Sabbath of the first day. It is usual, at least, and I believe it is right, to regard the Christian Sabbath as a true representative of the Jewish. There are those who think otherwise; who maintain that the Jewish Sabbath was abrogated together with the Temple worship and the sacrifices, and that the Christian Sunday is simply a day on which the Church has thought it reverent and profitable to commemorate the Lord's Resurrection. But if we can perceive that a day which bears witness of the risen Saviour must be the most effectual witness for the same principle which was set forth in the old Sabbath, we shall readily admit all that is affirmed in the latter statement, without contradicting the general tradition which has taken for granted that the Lord's Day is to the Church of Christ what the Sabbath was to the Jewish nation.

In order that we may thoroughly recognize this connection, we must bear in mind that the Jewish Sabbath was always, according to the Divine account of it, the Day of Rest. The command to 'keep it holy to the Lord,' is sometimes misunderstood as if it meant to occupy the day in religious exercises. But the law says nothing of religious occupations for the Sabbath-

day. It was to be kept holy to the Lord by the cessation of ordinary labour. It was to be a holy-day, or holiday, for man-servant and maid-servant. It was very strictly forbidden, and under the heaviest penalty, to *do work* on the seventh day; but no commandment was given as to the way in which the people should take their rest. The first recorded observation of the Sabbath-day was shortly after the children of Israel entered the wilderness, before the giving of the law. When God began to send down the special supply of manna, enough for two days was to be gathered on the sixth day of the week. Those who went out to gather on the seventh day were severely rebuked. The Lord said to Moses, "See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days: abide ye every man in his place: let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day." Every one will easily recall the language of the fourth commandment. Shortly after that was given, we read a more special and precise enforcing of the Sabbath-day. The Lord said to the children of Israel, "Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth

sanctify you. Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore, for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done: but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath-day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed." (Exodus xxxi. 13—17.)

The language of the subsequent books of the Old Testament relating to the Sabbath-day is entirely to the same effect. In the rehearsal of the Ten Commandments given in Deut. v. the keeping of the Sabbath is made a memorial of the deliverance out of the servitude of Egypt. "Thou shalt do no work, neither thou, nor son or daughter, man-servant or maid-servant, cattle or stranger within thy gates, that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought

thee out thence, through a mighty hand and by a stretched-out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day." In Isaiah lviii. the warmest exhortation to the keeping of the Sabbath is connected with the most vehement cautions against religious forms separated from justice and mercy. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?...If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul: then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday." And then follows: "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and

feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

We must not lose sight of the fact, implied in some of the words which I have quoted, that the day of rest was to be a lasting bond between the children of Israel and their God. It served the same purpose which was the object of so many of their institutions,—that of separating them from the nations round about them. It was to be a sign that the Lord their God sanctified *them*, the whole nation; that is, that he had consecrated them especially to Himself from amongst other nations. A Jew would not be keeping the Sabbath properly unless he remembered the Lord God of his fathers who gave it to him. But then, he was to remember Him as a God whose tokens were all tokens of goodness, who had delivered the whole people, and had made provisions against their falling into slavery, who had appointed a strict day of rest from common labour, in order that the poor might rest together with the rich, and all might remember their common Maker and Deliverer in heaven.

That being the significance of the Sabbath day according to the old law, can we help seeing that the Divine purpose in it was fulfilled in the rising of Christ from the dead to be a bond of peace and rest between God and all men, and that

therefore the celebration of the old Sabbath, as a witness of God's purpose, is fitly represented by the celebration of the resurrection day? The traditions of the Church bring us to this conclusion; nor have we any interest, even if we wish to protest against a gloomy puritanical observance of the Lord's day, in rejecting it. For in the first place, no one would pretend that Christians are bound by every minute detail of the Jewish law; and in the next place, the ordinances of the Jewish law relating to the Sabbath are only strict in excluding labour, not in prescribing religious exercises.

This will follow, however, from a connection of the Jewish with the Christian day, that we shall see in it a public and social character, and not only an obligation on private individuals. One day's rest in seven for the nation was the ordinance under the old law; and we shall be bound to regard this as appointed still by the Providence of God under the kingdom of Christ.

Having spoken thus rapidly of the principles of our Christian Sabbath, I desire to consider what responsibilities the inheritance of this day imposes upon ourselves; what our private duties are, and whether we have any public duties, in connection with this day.

1. First, I submit, it is a Christian's duty to

make it a day of rest. Now, we can only have rest as a change from labour. It is therefore utterly impossible for an idle man, who never does any work, to keep the Sabbath-day. As a general rule, the rest of the seventh day implies the labour of the six. It is not therefore an unreasonable use of a casual expression in the Commandment, Six days shalt thou labour, to argue that the fourth Commandment itself requires men to work on the six days, as well as to rest on the seventh. In the nature of things, rest is the balance of work; and the wholesome life of a man is that of one whose six days are well occupied with industrious work, and who enjoys between every six, one day's interval of repose. Though Sunday is not so happy a day as it ought to be, it must come round as a great relief to all hardworking men. Even if they enjoy their work, so that it does not press on them as a heavy burden, still the work enables them to appreciate rest, as the rest prepares them for a hearty renewal of labour.

There are a multitude of exceptions to the regular balance of six days' labour and one day's rest. But when they are legitimate, they have the effect of proving the rule. Perhaps the most striking example of this amongst ourselves is the case of the clergyman. Sunday is not his day of bodily rest. The clergyman works on Sunday,

often laboriously; and his work is the strictly professional work by which he earns his living. It is he who, more universally than any one else, violates the letter of the Commandment which prescribes a day of rest. But he does so, in order that the mass of the community may have the fitting occupation for their day of rest. And the nature of the occupation is such as to lead him into the knowledge of that highest rest which is not separated from work, but blends with it, and perfects it; so that it is possible for him to enjoy the truest and deepest refreshment of the Spirit whilst he is labouring to lead others to enter into that rest. So "the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless."

At the same time, it were to be wished, I think, that religious occupations were not thrust out of the week and crowded into Sunday so exclusively as they are now in this country, but that the day might be a lighter day, more of a day of unmixed refreshment, for all.

2. Secondly, it is a duty of the Christian, in keeping the Sabbath-day, to receive the lesson it teaches, that rest is a gift from God, as work is an ordinance of God. The Jews were bidden to regard their Sabbath, not as a product of their own policy, but as a boon from God. The Christian is bound to take all his rest similarly as a boon from

God. And he is to accept rest as something which belongs to God's own nature, and through which he may have fellowship with God's nature. The fourth Commandment recites, that in six days God created heaven and earth, and on the seventh He rested. *Therefore* the Israelite was to work for six days, and rest on the seventh. We cannot fathom the mystery of God's work and rest. Distinctions of time, as of six days and a seventh, the Bible itself teaches us to regard as only figures when used of the eternal nature of God. But the figures are indications of something real. There is that which answers to work in God's nature, and there is that which answers to rest. A man who believes that he is a partaker of the Divine nature may believe that he is a follower of God both when he works and when he rests: and a Christian will accept the Divine distinction of the work days and rest day in the economy of his own life as something which does not set him apart from God, but which is a bond of union between him and God.

3. This view will become more real to him, if he recognizes as a third sabbatical duty, that of contemplating the risen Saviour, in whom God and men are united. It is certainly the peculiar Christian observance of the Sabbath, to remember Him who died and rose again for us. In remem-

bering Him, we acknowledge that there is a rest both deeper and more necessary than bodily rest, the rest of the heart and soul. The Sabbath-day is the external symbol and sacrament of that rest. The Christian believes that a man who has forgotten God and rebelled against Him cannot be truly at peace or at rest. He holds that the only perfect peace is that of him whose mind is stayed on God, who is reconciled to God, and trusts in Him. The Son of God and the Son of Man is our peace. He has reconciled us to His Father. He has proclaimed the Father's love and forgiveness. Through Him we have access to the Father, and may come with confident though repentant trust, into the Father's presence.

But upon this subject I must not now dwell. I can only point out, as an essential part of a Christian observance of the resurrection day, the contemplation of Christ as the bringer of rest and peace to men.

Attendance at public worship, which is so closely identified with observance of the Sabbath, is not prescribed by any law. It is a tradition of the Church. It would be open to any one, to say that he accepts the Sabbath-day as Divine, and believes in the fourth commandment, and yet to hold aloof from public worship. He would only be setting up his judgment against the universal

belief and custom of Christendom. Even the Jews, though their law did not prescribe it, adopted the custom of meeting in synagogues on the Sabbath-day. Ever since our Lord rose again from the dead, believers in Christ have been accustomed to meet for worship on the first day of the week. It will be clear therefore that any one who departs from this custom takes a great responsibility upon himself. The *amount* of attendance at Church on a Sunday, is also a matter in which custom must have great weight, and in which no law prevents any one from acting on his own judgment. Our Church gives us two services for Sundays; but it may be said, as far as the authority of the Prayer-book is concerned, that two services are also given for every other day of the week; so that existing customs have entirely broken down the old traditions of our own Church. Let each one therefore act on his own judgment in this matter; only remembering that he is dealing with a question of very sacred importance, and that any one who cares for his neighbours and country as well as for himself, must not think only of his own edification,—though he must consider that more than pleasure,—but also of his share in maintaining or in weakening a great public and national habit.

No one ought to forget that the spending, in one way or another, of the first day of the week, is a matter of national importance. Many persons, looking at the question from a merely secular point of view, have believed that upon the alternative, Sabbath or no Sabbath, the whole prosperity of the nation would turn. There is scarcely a single Englishman who could endure the thought of having all days of the week alike,—the course of continuous toil being only suspended by the private choice of each particular worker. But probably few have considered in how momentous a degree the freedom of our citizens, the sense of equality and brotherhood in the whole nation, depend upon our Sabbatical institutions.

To speak therefore of our duties with reference to the day of rest, not as private individuals, but as members of society, I doubt whether any one would deny that we ought to do what we can, by example and by opinion, to promote the due observance of the Sunday. Assuming this, I wish to suggest the further question, Whether we ought to be willing to do anything by public laws, including penalties, to promote this object?

No doubt we are here upon ground where we must tread with much caution and circumspection. We have given up the attempt to enforce by law many things which the majority believe to be

desirable, and which our ancestors endeavoured to enforce by law. We are on our guard, and ought to be, against using public penalties to compel men to do what it is better that reason and conscience should compel them to do. No reasonable man, in these days, would wish that men should be compelled by law to attend public worship or otherwise to make a good use of their Sunday. We are in a state of transition, as regards the use of laws; and this fact naturally makes thoughtful persons unwilling to rush into legislation, when motives of humanity and piety would impel them.

I am speaking now with reference to a Bill which is before Parliament, the design of which is to limit the needless labour of buying and selling on Sundays. There are those who acknowledge the excellence of the object, but who question the expediency of seeking to promote it by legislation. I ask your consideration of the matter, because it is one in which we may all help or hinder the movement, and one in which our Christian and political principles are closely concerned.

I imagine that all reasonable advocates of the Bill would admit almost all that would be urged by reasonable persons on the other side as to the general question of promoting public

virtue and religion by penalties. They might admit that the observance of the Sunday at any particular time and place must depend upon the public opinion of the time or place, and that it is hopeless to coerce public opinion by law. But they would contend that the principle of coercing a minority, who not out of thoughtful principles, but out of nothing but indolence or greediness, violate what all opinion that deserves to be called such, considers right and wholesome for the nation, is a principle upon which wise men are continually legislating. Legal penalties are for those who do a public mischief without having anything to plead in defence of their conduct, but their own exceptional interest or their obstinate caprice. Take vaccination as one instance. The whole body of thoughtful opinion in the country, with trifling exceptions, is in favour of vaccination. A law is accordingly made to prevent persons from propagating small-pox by careless neglect of vaccination. Take other sanitary laws. Individuals who would keep their premises in a state of unwholesome foulness, or who would overcrowd lodgers into them, are restrained by penalties. There are laws to regulate the destruction of wild creatures, laws to regulate the employment of women and children, laws to regulate the sale of intoxicating liquors,

and all enforced by penalties, because there are persons ignorant or careless or greedy enough to violate what all reasonable persons would wish to be a universal custom. You cannot trust in all cases to a good custom maintaining itself. Where one violater of it can make a private profit out of breaking it, the violation is likely to become contagious, and it is a wise policy to prohibit it altogether.

Now, almost all Englishmen are agreed that the cessation of trade-labour is most desirable on Sundays. Whatever their religious opinions may be, they agree in this secular conclusion. Wherever the opinions of thinking persons prevail, and customs are deliberate expressions of opinion, the labour of buying and selling does cease on Sunday, and shopkeepers, like other classes, have their day of rest. But there are portions of our society and of our metropolis in which the prevailing custom is more the expression of indolence than of deliberate opinion; where opinion is not strong enough to control action. In these the habit of Sunday trading prevails to a vexatious and oppressive degree. The result of it is what we see in this immediate neighbourhood, that Sunday morning is a great marketing time, there can be no air of repose or cleanliness in the

streets, and the shopkeepers are kept busy all the morning, if not all the day. The Sabbath is wiped out of the existence of a considerable class. Why should this be? No one can give any good reason for it. Every one can see the evil of it. Is it justifiable then, in this case, to interfere by law, and to help the offenders against their own indolence and imprudence? I cannot doubt that it is.

It should of course be remembered that if a wise and considerate law be made to restrict Sunday trading, we should not be introducing the first legislation upon this subject. Laws exist, which are felt to be too stringent in their demands, too feeble in their penalties, for promoting rest on Sundays. These we should repeal, in changing them to what would be more reasonable and more suitable for our circumstances.

It is proposed not to push legislative coercion further than the point to which all but universal opinion would now go. There are many who think it would be very hard to prevent the poor from buying meat or fish on Sunday mornings. I myself see no rule in the Bible which forbids this any more than it forbids a domestic servant to prepare a Sunday dinner. But there is no one of any judgment who would not think it better that all buying and selling should be got

over at an early hour on Sunday, and that the sellers of crockery or clothes should have their whole Sunday free from the burden of business.

If the Bill I speak of be passed, I believe that no one will have any real reason to complain of its operation, and that multitudes will bless the authors and promoters of it for having put them on a level, in the enjoyment of Sunday freedom, with their now more favoured fellow-citizens. I believe that the less the poor buy on Sundays, the better economy will they exercise. They will have more rest on Sundays, by getting not only the payment of wages, but the spending of them, well over on Saturday night. But with respect to the common necessaries of life, they will still have the opportunity of purchasing them on Sunday morning, without which opportunity they would certainly be at a disadvantage compared with their more well-to-do neighbours.

There is a good prospect that, through the earnest exertions of the class most interested, and by general agreement, the Bill may be carried into law. If we can do anything to help it, by petitioning or otherwise, I think we shall be doing our duty as good citizens and as thoughtful Christians.

SERMON XXI.

HOLY SEASONS.

GALATIANS IV. 10, 11.

"Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain."

THESE words would appear to condemn our meeting together on this day. Apparently they forbid a preacher of Christ to encourage the observance of such a season as Lent.

Of course no clergyman or churchman can understand them in that sense. The legislators of the Church would never have established sacred days and seasons,—our Ash-Wednesdays and our Lents,—if they had supposed that St Paul believed that the observance of them would frustrate all his Apostolic labour. But when we reject the first apparent sense of any words of Scripture, it becomes interesting and important to consider

how we *do* understand them. Let us ask this morning how this rebuke of St Paul's bears upon our observance of Lent. I have chosen this question, not simply in order to get rid of an objection, but because I think it will lead us to the truest and most profitable view of that observance to which the annual order of the Church is now inviting us.

Observe first, brethren, how strong and unqualified St Paul's language is. It is quite a characteristic of Scripture, and not least of our blessed Lord's own sayings, that statements are given which cannot possibly mean what they literally say. Take for example our Lord's injunction to His followers to hate father and mother. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." No one ever supposed that our Lord wished his disciples to *hate* their kinsfolk. We are obliged therefore to ask what He *did* mean; and we reasonably suppose that by the use of such terms He intended to startle us into attention, and to gain an entrance for His meaning into our minds.

Now it is a most mistaken and mischievous view of such passages to regard them merely as rhetorical exaggerations. When Christian teachers

have argued from the above saying of Jesus Christ, that his followers ought to *moderate* their filial and conjugal love, and 'to sit loose,' as the phrase has been, to human relationships, they have been misrepresenting our Divine Master as much as they have been outraging the instincts of a true morality. Our Saviour certainly wished His followers to love father and mother *more*, and not *less*, than they would have done had they not been His disciples. He knew that those who would recognize God's claim, and His claim, on their hearts as stronger than any other, would find their human loves to be thereby vindicated, established, purified, and strengthened. He chose therefore *in appearance* to underrate the fulfilment of human duty, that *in reality* He might sustain and elevate it. When He says, 'Give yourselves up to Me; hate father and mother in comparison of Me;' He is virtually saying, 'The only way in which you can love father and mother as constantly and devotedly as you ought is by honouring Me first.'

We must be on our guard against supposing hastily that St Paul, again, is merely exaggerating in our text. That view has led to misunderstandings of his meaning. Thus it has been held, and by Divines of high authority, that this and similar passages in Romans and Colossians are

conclusive against the idea of an authoritative Christian Sabbath. They say that St Paul would never have protested that each man was free to regard all days as alike, that he would never have remonstrated against the observance of days, had he believed that the observance of one day in seven was binding on the Church. They hold that it is highly expedient and profitable to keep certain seasons and certain days by the appointment of the Church, but that it is to be carefully remembered that such observances have no Divine sanction: and they claim St Paul as declaring this doctrine. But St Paul says nothing of the kind. He says no single word about a distinction in such matters between human and Divine appointment. He does not say in this passage, 'You may observe days and months and times and years,—it is expedient and profitable that you should,—provided you are satisfied that God has had nothing to do with the institution of such times and seasons.' Such a notion is as foreign to his principles as to his language. His condemnation of the observance of days tells at least as much against a Sunday of ecclesiastical appointment as against a Divine Sabbath.

That is one misinterpretation of our text,—the notion that St Paul is distinguishing between Divine and human appointment. There is

another, less arbitrary and farfetched, but also a misinterpretation. I mean that of those who would say that St Paul, not touching upon the question of appointment, is inculcating a certain indifference to all external observances, as suitable to enlightened and spiritual persons. According to this view, St Paul would be pleased with the feeling about Lent, for example, which now prevails. At least he could not be quoted by any who would urge a stricter observance of days and seasons. He is understood as saying, These external observances are needless and questionable, if not entirely mischievous; the great question is whether you are inwardly good.

But what St Paul really does say is too strong for that view. He cries out, "How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, wherein ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days and months and times and years; I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain."

The truth is, that he was afraid that the Galatians might *substitute* the observance of times for belief in Christ, or which was the same thing, for a laying hold of their adoption to God in Christ. The proclamation made by him as an Apostle from the first had been simple and firm, and he repeats it emphatically just above, our

text,—'God hath sent forth His Son, in our nature, and subject to our conditions, that we men may receive the adoption of sons; and because we are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba Father.' *This calling to sonship*, this *dispensation of the filial spirit*, was to be the *fundamental right and condition for every man*. Suppose the message was believed: there was no reason whatever why those who received it should not go on with a scrupulous attention to days and other ordinances of outward worship and discipline. Whether they did or not, would depend on the character of such customs and upon the intimations of the Divine will. But the message might be nominally received and really put on one side. Men might say, 'It is all very well to have a faith in Christ; that doctrine of adoption may be good in its place after primary conditions have been attended to; but the main thing, or at the very least the first and most indispensable thing, with ordinary men, is to require conformity to appointed usages. This conformity must be highly satisfactory to the Supreme Ruler: the first step into His more intimate favour must be obedience to His laws or to institutions set up in His honour.'

This was what St Paul assailed so vehemently,—this withholding and reserving of the

Gospel of universal redemption and adoption. When we consider with what intensity he believed in that Gospel, what a glorious power, what a regeneration for mankind, he saw in the truth that God called all men everywhere into the knowledge of Himself,—into direct fellowship with Himself in His crucified Son, we may understand the eagerness and the severity with which he would denounce any false doctrine which clouded the glad tidings of Christ the Deliverer of mankind, of Christ the Mediator between men and their Father in heaven. Whatever doctrine threatened to produce this effect,—whether it were a Judaising worship of external forms, or the Gnostical speculation which filled the heaven with spiritual abstractions and emanations,—the deadly mischief of it was its rivalship to the true Gospel, the Gospel which invited all men everywhere to believe and hope in God through Jesus Christ, and to call God their Father in the Spirit.

St Paul therefore was not at this moment touching the question whether the Divine laws which had ordained solemn seasons were abrogated or not. He did not say, Your zeal in observing days would have been perfectly right thirty years ago; now it has become criminal, because the Jewish Law is repealed. The indignation which he felt was just as strongly ex-

pressed by inspired men of other times whilst the Jewish law was in full force. There had been no abrogation of Sabbaths and new moons when God Himself said by the mouth of a prophet, "Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me: the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with: it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your *appointed feasts* my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me. I am weary to bear them."

The comparison of this and similar passages from the old prophets, with the prophet-like utterances of St Paul, seem to me to shew plainly how we are to understand such passages as that of our text. The controversy is one of all dispensations and ages,—the controversy between God's gracious gift of freedom to men through trust in His fatherly will, and man's determination to fashion a system of bondage for himself, and to separate himself from God. God has in all times given to men witnesses of His redeeming love and helps to emancipation. So He gave sacrifices and holy days to the children of Israel. But when they turned these into veils for the hiding of God and excuses for slavery, there was no fastidiousness on the part of those whom God inspired in denouncing these, God's own institutions.

What then do we learn from the whole Bible,—from the Prophets and the Apostles alike,—concerning the subject we are considering? Why, this:—that any external institution, Divine or human, is good so far as it testifies of God's redeeming love in His Son, and helps us to abide in that love as our rightful inheritance; and that every external institution, were it the Divinest conceivable, becomes bad when it is substituted for the acknowledgment of that love. If the Sabbath was not guaranteed against perversion in Isaiah's time, or in our Lord's time, neither is it now. The Sabbath may be turned to God's dishonour now as easily as it was then. But what is the remedy for such a danger? Not the abandonment of the Sabbath, but the study of its true meaning.

You will see, brethren, how directly this applies to the season of Lent, and our observance of it. I do not see that we gain much by saying to ourselves, This is not a Divine institution; it is merely human, and may be safely neglected; nay, there would be great danger in paying it too strict a regard. Undoubtedly there would be danger; but there would be no less danger, if Christ Himself had ordained Lent as expressly as He ordained the Sacraments. The Sacraments themselves *may* be made instruments to hide God instead of revealing Him, instruments to separate and repel

the spirits of men from God, instead of drawing them to God. Every one admits that, but few hold that therefore we ought to give up the Sacraments. The justification of every external ordinance whatever is that it testifies of God's redeeming love. Our wisdom, in reference to every external ordinance, is to make the most of it for cleaving to that love.

It may be said that the witness specially assigned to Lent is not a witness in behalf of God's love, but against man's sin. It is true that in Lent we are particularly called upon to confess our sins; but our sins against whom? And to whom are we to confess them? Our sins are so exceedingly sinful, because they are committed against a gracious Protector and Helper, against a Father and Friend. We are encouraged to confess our sins to a God who hates nothing that He has made, and therefore not the most inexcusable sinners, but who forgives the sins of all them that are penitent. Our *sense* of sin, in the first place, and our willingness to confess it, in the next, will depend on the view we obtain of the loving Father who has redeemed us from all iniquity by the sacrifice of His beloved Son.

Let us remember then, dear brethren, not to set up this or any other solemn season in the place of the present love of God, and that adoption of

children which we have received in Christ, but to refer and subordinate this and other times alike to God's goodness in Christ. We may need the warning St Paul gives us, against a mistaken use of sacred things. Your presence here this morning is a sign that you do not slight and reject sacred seasons, but hope for some benefit from the use of them. Let us be careful not to let our church-going, either during the week or on Sundays, produce in us a sense of security; let us watch against this risk by looking up directly, and from the bottom of our hearts, to our Father in heaven.

But, let us not suppose that, placed as we are amidst countless influences from external things and trained up under the discipline of circumstances, we may not hope to gain any help towards maintaining our trust in God and our love for Christ from outward usages. If we find that a daily routine of labour and pleasure has a numbing effect upon our spirits, if we want some bulwark against the flood of the world's interests, if we need to assert a mastery over our common appetites that they may not make us selfish and sensual, it may be that through some of the exercises associated with Lent, through some unobtrusive abstinence, through some additional private study and private prayer, through some extra attendances at church, through some special acts of kindness

and sacrifice, we may be helped in casting off hindrances which have prevented us from recognizing God's love in Christ. Any such efforts must be accompanied by the discovery and confession of our own evil,—of our sloth, of our perverseness, of our vanity. But do not attempt, brethren, to excite a feeling of guiltiness or self-abhorrence otherwise than by laying yourselves bare before the perfect goodness of God, such as we know it through Christ. Keep St Paul's great principle before your eyes, and let the fact that we are made God's own children in Him who died and rose again for us, and by the gift of His own Spirit, be always predominant in your religious reflections. So you will be best quickened to repentance and amendment of life; so you will be most heartily ashamed of the lusts of the flesh or spirit which have caused you to wander from your Father's home; so you will accept most humbly the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, by whose aid alone we can worthily confess our sin, by whom alone we can be restored, and enabled to live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of God's holy name.

SERMON XXII.

THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN.

ST. MATTHEW XXIV. 3.

"As He sat upon the Mount of Olives, His disciples came to Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

BY the very appointment and by the name of the season of Advent, the Church teaches us to look forward to a yet future coming of the Son of God. During the course of this season we are instructed to meditate in a special degree upon that coming. This is plain upon the surface of our Prayer-book forms, and no loyal Churchman would question the obligation thus laid upon him.

There are more reasons than might at first occur to your minds, why we should put this fact clearly before us. I desire to draw your attention this morning to one of these reasons. During Advent,—that is, whilst we are taught to look forward to a coming of the Son of Man not yet

accomplished,—we read passages of Scripture, taken out of many of a similar kind, in which the Son of Man is spoken of as about to come. Most appropriately, we should say. But on considering these passages, we observe what may seem strange and confusing. They were spoken or written eighteen centuries ago, and they seem to describe a coming which was to take place very soon after they were uttered.

This would be the first impression of every unprejudiced person on reading this chapter of St Matthew, the corresponding chapters in the other Gospels, and almost every passage in the later books of the New Testament, which refers to the coming of the Son of Man. Our Lord, in the discourse of this chapter, connects His own coming as plainly as words can do it, with the throwing down of the stones of the Temple, and with the profaning of the Holy Place. He warns the actual disciples before him as to their conduct during the events that were to come. These warnings are almost more prominent than the predictions: the predictions seem to be given, indeed, for the sake of the warnings founded upon them. In v. 34, his words are, 'Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.' After the

same solemn declaration, in St Luke's Gospel, follow the warnings, "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." We can hardly doubt that those words were in St Paul's memory, when he wrote to the Romans, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day,—not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Our Lord and St Paul are alike exhorting their contemporaries not to let the lusts of the flesh blind them to the dawnings of a day that was coming upon themselves. The book of Revelation is an account, according to its own shewing, of "things which must shortly come to pass." The third verse of its opening chapter declares, "Blessed is he that readeth, and those that hear the words of this pro-

phecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand." The last chapter repeats this affirmation in the same terms. Now this book of the Revelation connects itself with those discourses of our Lord in the Gospels, by using the very language of them. Thus, in i. 7, we read, "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him."

All readers would assuredly have taken these assertions, as to the time of the Lord's coming, to mean what they say, but for one difficulty. It is supposed that as a matter of fact the coming of the Son of Man did *not* take place soon after those predictions were given, for that it has not taken place yet. How is this difficulty to be got over? There are persons, amongst the many readers of the Bible, who find no difficulty in supposing the Apostle to have been mistaken on such a subject. Nay, there are some, not without reverence for Jesus Christ and his words, who appeal to our Lord's own witness,—"Of that day and of that hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father,"—and who claim the warrant of that confession for holding that Jesus Christ did not know rightly Himself concerning

the time of His coming. All this class of readers will say, 'No doubt the coming of the Son of Man is represented in the Bible as about to occur in the Apostolic age, but this was a mistake.' Those who shrink from such an opinion, but who still cannot recognize a coming of the Son of Man at the end of that age, are obliged to suppose that the words 'soon' and 'quickly' do not in the passages I have referred to mean soon and quickly, and that positive details with regard to the destruction of Jerusalem and with regard to the final coming, still at this day future, of the Son of Man, are mingled together in what we should call, in any other book, confusion. A third alternative, and one which seems to me a much more acceptable one, is to believe that our Lord and His Apostles meant what they said, that they were not mistaken, and that the Son of Man came at the end of that age, according to prophecy, in the treading under foot of Jerusalem and in the events of world-wide importance with which that age was wound up.

But now, dear brethren, let me repeat what I began by saying. The Church bids us in this 19th century look forward to a future Advent of the Son of Man. As food for our meditations in view of that future Advent, it gives us prophetical

descriptions of an Advent which occurred, as we claim to hold, before the end of the first century.

Are these injunctions necessarily inconsistent with one another? If not, how do we reconcile them? What practical instruction can we draw from those fulfilled prophecies in reference to an event yet to be fulfilled? These are questions which we should all pray humbly for light from above to enable us to answer.

Let me submit to you three conclusions which I think Scripture would bring us to, with some probability at least, upon this matter.

1. First, concerning the great final coming of the Son of Man, that to which we have yet to look forward, the Scripture nowhere professes to give us historical or chronological details. This is almost equivalent to what I have already said,—namely, that the details of that kind which we do find in Scripture, as those, for example, in this chapter, which are specific enough, refer in their primary and direct application to the coming by which the Jewish period was wound up, and the new age, of the reign of the Son of Man, was brought in. Those who hold that historical details concerning the future Advent of Christ are given us in Scripture would refer to this chapter especially. If there is nothing *here*, they would say, which belongs exclusively to the Advent not

yet fulfilled, we readily admit that there is nothing in any other part of the Sacred Volume. We must therefore face that conclusion,—a conclusion, I know, which many would unwillingly receive. But those who magnify the Scriptures most and who lean upon the positive statements of Scripture most confidingly, should be precisely those to reverence the truth of Scripture most humbly, to inquire most anxiously what it says itself, and to be most afraid of any confusions or manœuvres by which it may be made to say what we wish it to say.

Observe, brethren, I am not stating that there are no *facts* revealed to us concerning the future Advent of the Son of Man. The conclusion which I am proposing to you is this,—that we are not to look in Scripture for definite historical predictions given on purpose that they might tally with the particular order of events going on now, or with other events which may yet happen in the history of the world. We may feel a craving for that kind of information, but it does not follow that it has been given us. We do not find in the Bible all the information which we could ask for; nor have we any reason to persuade ourselves that such information, if given, would profit us. Our business with Scripture is not to gratify our fancies, but to learn as much as we can of what it is designed to

teach us, being sure that we shall be likely to gain the truest benefit from it, if we clear our minds of prepossessions, and study, not how much of edifying matter we can import into the Scriptures, but what their fair sense is, and what they were intended, literally and historically, to convey.

2. If, however, the historical predictions concerning the Lord's Advent were not primarily spoken with an application to the present time, or to the time of the future coming of the Lord, they may nevertheless throw light, not only upon the present time, but upon that future Advent also. We may gather, what we really do want to know, the nature of our Lord's coming, and of the final issues of the Divine purposes in human history.

Might we not be content, if we could learn these things, to be ignorant of the times and the seasons, which the Father has placed in his own hands? Surely the important requisite for us, is to have a faith in some definite future, and in the movements of the courses of things towards that future. And I do not know how we could gain a stronger and firmer impression of the kind of issues which God will hereafter bring out of things, than by studying the predictions and the warnings which were given to prepare the Jews and the early believers for the wonderful Advent of the Apostolical age.

Let me touch very slightly upon some of the characteristics of the future thus revealed to us.

(1) The main point of all is the coming itself. 'What shall be the sign of thy *coming?*' 'Behold, He *cometh* with clouds.' From this we gather, that whatever now hinders the coming or the unveiling of the Lord from being complete, must be done away. He must yet *come*, in a complete and decisive manner; He must so come, that no one shall say, He is not here.

(2) Again, there is a significance in the title generally applied to Christ in connection with His coming. It is the *Son of Man* who comes. Our Lord thus described Himself: "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." We are therefore to look for the perfect and universal manifestation of Jesus, the Son of Mary, as the heir and head of the human race. He, in His meekness, His sympathy, His self-surrender, His fellowship with every man, will be known to be present, wherever there is a creature to whom such a presence is perceptible.

(3) But the Son of Man does not come alone. He comes in the glory of His Father. So we must expect a perfect manifestation of the glory of the

Father, when the Son of Man is fully revealed. Then it will be seen, so that none can question it, what a height and dignity belong to our human nature, shared by the Son of God. Then will the reality of God's fatherhood to men be acknowledged and patent. The Father's glory will be complete in the triumph of His Son, who is also the Son of Man.

(4) Because the Son of God was also the Son of Man, all *judgment*, said Christ Himself, was committed by the Father into His hands. He comes to judge. He comes, as the righteous Lord, to look into the ways of His servants, and to reward them according to their faithfulness. We are therefore to be looking for a wise Master, to whom our service is due, and whose supervision we cannot evade.

(5) He comes to judge the princes and tribes of the earth. His triumph therefore must be public. His appearing and His judgment will have to do, not merely with individual souls, but with nations and communities. He must be openly honoured as the Lord of mankind. The earth must confess His sway.

(6) This *openness* of all things in the presence of the manifested Son of Man is much spoken of. The day of the Lord in Scripture, is not so much a day in time, as a day in light and clearness.

Those to whom the Son of Man is present are required to live as children of the light and of the day; as those who have nothing to conceal. The appearing of the Son of Man dispels the darkness and what it covers. Crimes and vices and all evil designs are children of night. They flee before the light of day. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." We are to regard the coming of the Son of Man, therefore, as the coming of a light which will shine into the most secret parts and make them manifest.

(7) Lastly, to conclude these few and hasty hints, the kind of triumph with which the Lord who is to come will be satisfied, is pointed out with sufficient clearness. The conquests of the Son of man, of the Prince of peace, are over the *hearts* of His brother-men. He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them; not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. It would be an unsuitable triumph to such a Son of Man, simply to reduce to hopeless misery all who do not acknowledge Him. We can hardly think of such misery as a permanent and a satisfying element in the homage which all things in heaven and in earth and under the earth are to render to the crucified

Jesus to the glory of the Father. We have but to put together the two thoughts,—of the absolute triumph of Jesus Christ, and of His loving self-sacrificing nature, and we shall be unable to think of Him as rendering up the Kingdom in satisfaction to the Father, because there is no human being unreconciled to Him who is not also perfectly miserable. "It pleased the Father," says St Paul,—and the fulfilment of that good pleasure must be the final crown of things,—"by Him to reconcile *all things* unto himself; by *Him*, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."

3. Thus far, dear brethren, I have been speaking of characteristics of what we must present to our minds as the end of all things, meaning by end not so much a termination in time as the perfect consummation of things, that in which present tendencies and efforts which are struggling with opposition shall come to a satisfying issue. I have touched upon some marks of that consummation which are given us in the Scriptural account of one great advent of Him whom we look for as yet, in that more complete and triumphant degree, to come. But I would suggest thirdly, another application of those chapters of Scripture.

Suppose we can believe that what our Lord

foretold as about to come to pass in that generation did actually take place. Suppose we admit that there was then the end of an old age and the beginning of a new age,—that the Son of Man was then manifested, in the convulsion of powers and beliefs, in the darkening of the sun and moon, and the fall of the stars from heaven: suppose, therefore, we look upon the outward events described to us by Jewish and Roman historians of that time, as possessing an infinite significance of which those historians had no conception, being the embryo, so to speak, of the Christendom that was to be: the result of such a view will infallibly be to lead us to regard all historical events, including those of our own day and the coming age, in relation to God's will and to the grand purposes of human redemption. We should acquire something of the spirit of the old Hebrew prophets, who saw judgments of the living God in all events,—in wars, invasions, famines, deliverances. Those prophets were continually speaking of the day of the Lord. They warned their fellow-countrymen, in any season of carnal sloth and blindness and cowardice, that the Lord would certainly manifest Himself. They knew, better than they knew commoner and more obvious things, that an invisible Righteous Ruler was working in the history of their race and of the world.

They knew that He would not allow His righteousness to be hidden or to sleep, that it would be revealed in the overthrow of the oppressor and the ungodly, in the vindication of the upright and the meek. Any occurrences which opened men's eyes and which deepened men's thoughts, which shook the power of custom and ambition and sensuality, and forced them to admit the reality of spiritual truth and righteousness,—these were signs of the Lord, tokens which could only be described by symbols, such as the convulsion of the heavens and the trembling of the earth, which to us might seem exaggerated.

If, therefore, we were to study the prophecies of the early Advent of the Son of Man, not with a view of discovering fanciful coincidences, but with the hope of learning what the course of the Divine purpose then was, and how the marvellous events of the time were used for the unfolding of those purposes,—then all the facts and all the imagery of our Lord's discourses and of the book of Revelation might help us to interpret the events of our own day, and to look earnestly for the day of the Lord. We need not separate the struggles and movements of our own time by an infinite distance from that mysterious end of which I have been speaking. We may connect all the signs of the time with the revealing of the righte-

ous Lord, the Redeemer of men. We may cherish a faith that every great conflict, however much of human sin may be mixed up with it, shall be used to punish and expose the sin, to vindicate and proclaim the righteousness of God and of godly men. We may be told that these results are not always manifest in the issues of human affairs, that it is presumptuous and dangerous for us to decide summarily where righteousness is, and where it is not, that, if we attempt to judge by success, we may be victims of the most utter illusion. Just because these warnings have so much truth in them,—but because, also, we cannot and dare not give up the hope of righteousness and the looking for redemption in human affairs,—it concerns us, not indeed to be summary and hasty in our judgments, or to follow in the train of success, but to look to the Lord of righteousness more steadfastly, that He may throw light on His own doings, and that He may enable us to judge not according to appearances, but to judge righteous judgment. When the race which God had chosen was being trampled down by a heathen empire, and the place in which He had put His Name was being profaned by ostentatious impieties; when the believers in the Son of Man were a mocked and persecuted few, then those who trusted in the words of their Lord knew that His reign over the princes and

tribes of the earth was beginning, and that the Son of Man, in the glory of His Father, was proclaiming His kingdom over the world. The Christendom of eighteen centuries with all its faults and crimes, is the witness to the fulfilment of those predictions which Jesus uttered Himself, and which the Spirit taught His servants to utter. Whether we in our days are to judge of affairs and to look forward to issues in the same faith and the same hope, is a great question put before us. Advent, and the services of Advent, bear an unmistakeable witness on one side. Much human philosophy speaks loudly on the other. If we can honestly abide by the traditions of our fathers and the testimony of the Church,—and it would be a sin against one greater than traditions and Churches to do so otherwise than honestly,—we shall cling to the belief that the Son of Man is shewing His power and His principles in the administration of the world. We shall refuse to admit the cold and discouraging belief that the world in which we live and have our part is a chance chaos without guide or purpose. We shall see in the total of histories a grand drama working towards a close. We shall be sure that the close must be one glorious to the true and loving Creator, excellent for His creatures. And we shall long for this issue, and lean towards it, and labour for it. We shall

be impatient of evil and confusion, thirsty for light and order and deliverance. We shall desire that the Son of Man may be truly known, and faithfully acknowledged. We shall see in such knowledge and acknowledgment the highest perfection of which men and nations are capable.

Is it superfluous then, my brethren,—will you think it so, when you recall the common thoughts and notions which we inherit,—to ask you at least to do justice to the great topics of Advent, and to seek the light and the strength we want from Him who has promised to grant them? Let us meditate on the coming of the Son of Man, on His nature, on His prerogatives, on the designs of His policy. Let us suffer these to commend themselves to our hearts and our understandings. We are surely surrounded by signs and witnesses which throw light on that nature, on that authority, on those purposes. We are not driven of necessity into blank doubt and uncertainty as to the living sway of a will of righteousness and of love in all things. Within us and without are voices bearing witness to us of the glory of the Father and of the Son of Man. Hear what these voices say, Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth

and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord. May the Spirit of God enable us also to delight in these things, and to look for them. May we walk upon earth as those who see and believe in the lights of heaven above. May our own darkness be put to shame, and our own light increased. May we, ourselves, our Church, our Nation, be honoured like the mountain-tops, which being nearer heaven are permitted to catch the first glories of the opening day, and to make that day credible in the world around.

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